

Present Threats of Danger

An immediate, significant, and clearly observable family condition that is occurring or “in process” of occurring at the point of contact with a family and will likely result in severe harm to a child.

Present Threats of Danger—Maltreatment

- **The child is currently being maltreated at the time of the report or contact**
This means that the child is being maltreated at the time the report is being made, maltreatment has occurred the same day as the contact, or maltreatment is in process at the time of contact.
- **Severe to extreme maltreatment of the child is suspected, observed, or confirmed**
This includes severe or extreme forms of maltreatment and can include severe injuries, serious unmet health needs, cruel treatment, and psychological torture.
- **The child has multiple or different kinds of injuries**
This generally refers to different kinds of injuries, such as bruising and burns, but it is acceptable to consider one type of injury on different parts of the body.
- **The child has injuries to the face or head**
This includes physical injury to the face or head of the child alleged to be the result of maltreatment.
- **The child has unexplained injuries**
This refers to a serious injury which parents/caregivers and others cannot or will not explain. It includes circumstances where the injury is known to be non-accidental and the maltreater is unknown.
- **The maltreatment demonstrates bizarre cruelty**
This includes such things as locking up children, torture, extreme emotional abuse, etc.
- **The maltreatment of several victims is suspected, observed, or confirmed**
This refers to the identification of more than one child who currently is being maltreated by the same caregiver.
- **The maltreatment appears premeditated**
The maltreatment appears to be the result of a deliberate, preconceived plan or intent.
- **Dangerous (life threatening) living arrangements are present**
This is based on specific information which indicates that a child’s living situation is an immediate threat to his/her safety. This includes serious health and safety circumstances such as unsafe buildings, serious fire hazards, accessible weapons, unsafe heating or wiring, etc.

Present Threats of Danger—Child

- **Parent’s viewpoint of child is bizarre**
This refers to an extreme viewpoint that could be dangerous for the child, not just a negative attitude toward the child. The parent’s perception or viewpoint toward the child is so skewed and distorted that it poses an immediate danger to that child.
- **Child is unsupervised and unable to care for self**
This applies if the child is without care. This includes circumstances where an older child is left to supervise younger children and is incapable of doing so.
- **Child needs medical attention**
This applies to a child of any age. To be a present danger threat, the medical care required must be significant enough that its absence could seriously affect the child’s health and well-being. Lack of routine medical care is not a present danger threat.
- **The child is profoundly fearful of the home situation or people within the home**
“Home situation” includes specific family members and/or other conditions in the living arrangement. “People within the home” refers to those who either live in the home or frequent the home so often that a child routinely and reasonably expects that the person may be there or show up. The child’s fear must be obvious, extreme, and related to some perceived danger that the child feels or experiences. This threat can also be present for a child who does not verbally express fear but their behavior and emotion clearly and vividly demonstrate fear.

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Present Threats of Danger—Parent

- **Parent is intoxicated (alcohol or other drugs) now or is consistently under the influence**

This refers to a parent who is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs much of the time and this impacts their ability to care for the child.

- **Parent is out of control (mental illness or other significant lack of control)**

This can include unusual or dangerous behaviors; includes mental or emotional distress where a parent cannot manage their behaviors in order to meet their parenting responsibilities related to providing basic, necessary care and supervision.

- **Parent is demonstrating bizarre behaviors**

This will require interpretation of the reported information and may include unpredictable, incoherent, outrageous, or totally inappropriate behavior.

- **Parent is unable or unwilling to perform basic care**

This only refers to those parental duties and responsibilities consistent with basic care or supervision, not to whether the parent is generally effective or appropriate.

- **Parent is acting dangerous now or is described as dangerous**

This includes a parent described as physically or verbally imposing and threatening, brandishing weapons, known to be dangerous and aggressive, currently behaving in an aggressive manner, etc.

- **Parent’s whereabouts are unknown**

This includes situations when a parent cannot be located at the time of the report or contact and this affects the safety of the child.

- **One or both parents overtly reject intervention**

The key word here is “overtly.” This means that the parent essentially avoids all CPS attempts at communication and completion of the initial assessment/investigation. This refers to situations where a parent refuses to see or speak with CPS staff and/or to let CPS staff see the child; is openly hostile (not just angry about CPS presence) or physically aggressive towards CPS staff; refuses access to the home, hides the child or refuses access to the child.

Present Threats of Danger—Family

- **The family may flee**

This will require judgment of case information. Transient families, families with no clear home, or homes that are not established, etc., should be considered. This refers to families who are likely to be impossible or difficult to locate and does not include families that are considering a formal, planned move.

- **The family hides the child**

This includes families who physically restrain a child within the home as well as families who avoid allowing others to have contact with their child by passing the child around to other relatives, or other means to limit CPS access to the child.

- **Child is subject to present/active domestic violence**

This refers to presently occurring domestic violence and child maltreatment or a general recurring state of domestic violence that includes child maltreatment where a child is being subjected to the actions and behaviors of a perpetrator or domestic violence. There is greater concern when the abuse of a parent and the abuse of a child occur during the same time.

BENCHCARD B2

Impending Threats of Danger

A threat of danger is a specific family situation or behavior, emotion, motive, perception or capacity of a family member. The body of knowledge gained from Benchcard A is applied to specific criteria for what constitutes an impending threat of danger.

- Specific and Observable;
- Immediate;
- Out-of-control;
- Severe consequences

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- No adult in the home will perform parental duties and responsibilities.
 - One or both parents/caregivers are violent.
 - One or both parents'/caregivers' behavior is dangerously impulsive or they will not/cannot control their behavior.
 - One or both parents/caregivers have extremely negative perceptions of the child.
 - Family does not have or use resources necessary to assure the child's basic needs.
 - One or both parents/caregivers fear they will maltreat the child and/or request placement.
 - One or both parents/caregivers intend(ed) to seriously hurt the child.
 - One or both parents/caregivers lack parenting knowledge, skills, or motivation necessary to assure the child's basic needs are met.
 - The child has exceptional needs which the parents/caregivers cannot or will not meet.
 - Living arrangements seriously endanger the child's health.
 - The child is profoundly fearful of the home situation or people within the home.