

## **ESTABLISHING AND DOCUMENTING OVERALL SEVERITY AND OVERALL RISK**

After the fifteen factors have been rated, it is necessary to analyze the information gathered to determine the overall level of severity and the overall level of risk within the family. This is not done by simply finding the highest rating on the matrix, but rather by conducting a thoughtful analysis of the risk factors and determining how those factors may be interacting with each other.

### **DEFINITIONS OF RISK LEVELS**

- No Risk:** The absence of risk and/or the presence of strengths. Factors rated no risk (Z) may represent strengths which are powerful enough to reduce risk within the family.
- Low Risk:** A significant possibility that a minor form of abuse or neglect will occur in the near future. Low risk factors are rated with an (L).
- Moderate Risk:** A significant possibility that a serious form of abuse or neglect will occur in the near future. Moderate risk factors are rated with an (M).
- High Risk:** A significant possibility that a severe form of abuse or neglect will occur in the near future. High risk factors are rated with an (H).
- Unable to Assess:** Factors which can not be rated because of insufficient information are rated with an (X).

### **HIGHEST RISK FACTOR SECTION**

Review each of the ratings found in a particular risk factor. Select the highest risk rating found and enter that risk rating in the “highest risk factor section” for the factor being reviewed. An (X) rating should be considered higher than any other risk rating for the purpose of completing the Highest Risk Factor Section.

### **DETERMINING OVERALL SEVERITY**

**Overall Severity** represents the severity of the current abuse and neglect. Review factors 2 and 4, (Sev/Freq and/or recentness of abuse/neglect and Extent of Emotional Harm.) If there are no (X) ratings, the highest rating found represents the **Overall Severity** rating. If any of the ratings in either of these two factors in an (X), the impact of the absent information must be assessed to determine if the risk level should be raised as a result of the missing information.

Overall Risk represents a logical, thoughtful analysis of the impact on risk made by the interactions of all the risk factors. After determining the overall severity rating, the

further analysis of the remaining risk factors must be made. Factors 1 and 3 (Vulnerability and Prior Abuse/Neglect) should be reviewed closely. Moderate or high ratings for these factors may very well require that the overall risk level within the family be raised. These two factors represent the history of abuse/neglect coupled with the vulnerable state of the child(ren). All other factors should be closely reviewed to determine how they impact risk. Special consideration should be given to factors of **high intensity, long duration and which have environmental support**.

Additional things to consider include:

- ☞ The impact of unknown information (factors rated X)
- ☞ Factors, which when found together, (constellations or clusters) should be given added weight
- ☞ Dangerous combinations should raise “red flags” when found
- ☞ Strengths must be analyzed to determine whether or not they are strong enough to lower risk

## **RISK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

The narrative must represent a **logical progression of thought** that indicates the rationale for ratings contained on the matrix, leading the reader to the apparent overall level of risk. The following information should be contained in the narrative:

- ☞ Overall Severity and rationale
- ☞ Overall Risk and rationale
- ☞ Specific evidence to support moderate and high ratings
- ☞ Justification for all factors rated with an (X)
- ☞ Identification of strengths found within the family
- ☞ Safety assessment and safety plan
- ☞ Prioritization of problems within the family