

+-----+
| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |
+-----+

Transmittal No: 90 LCM-74

Date: May 29, 1990

Division: Family and Children
Services

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: CPS Risk Assessment

ATTACHMENTS: There are no attachments to this LCM

The purpose of this memorandum is to continue to keep you and your key program staff updated on the conceptual development of a risk assessment approach to cases originating through child protective services. Recently staff from the Division of Family and Children Services have been meeting with your Director of Services and/or CPS program staff to provide a status report on risk assessment activities and to receive local district input and recommendations. One area of particular interest has been our development work on a New York State Risk Assessment Model. The Department's Risk Assessment Workgroup has been meeting weekly since January to establish the basic principles which would define this model as well as draft the risk model protocols. Input from your staff and the experiences of various demonstration initiatives have been particularly helpful.

It is useful to begin by establishing the basic risk assessment definitions, principles and goals which form the framework for the New York State Model. The remaining section of this memorandum will identify some of the Model's basic principles, definitions, and goals.

1. Risk assessment is defined as the evaluation of factors that pertain to and influence all family members in order to help predict the likelihood that a child(ren) named in the report will be abused or maltreated in the future.
2. A sub-set of risk assessment is the assessment of child safety. A safety assessment would constitute an analysis of selected risk factors and individual circumstances that may suggest there is an immediate threat to a child that, if not controlled or alleviated, will cause or is likely to cause serious harm to the child.
3. The primary goal of risk assessment is to promote and support a structured, rational, decision-making approach to child protective services case practice, without replacing professional judgment. It should also have the capacity to assist the supervisor in monitoring, and evaluating staff, as well as supporting a shared responsibility for case decision making.
4. The adoption of a decision-making approach based on risk assessment should help clarify the roles and responsibilities of CPS casework and the roles of other programs that may serve CPS cases. This should support a common focus based on risk across all CPS cases, at all case stages.
5. Risk assessment is based on a social work or rehabilitative approach to working with families. It deliberately bolsters the focus of child protective services beyond an evidentiary, allegation driven system.
6. Risk assessment uses an approach to information gathering and analysis that examines the interrelatedness of five areas or "Forces" affecting family functioning. These Forces include the Child, Caretaker/Parent, Family, Intervention, and Maltreatment.
7. Risk assessment should apply to all active CPS cases, regardless of service provider or case planner
8. Risk assessment is not a static activity, therefore the structured re-assessment of risk and child safety should be a key feature of subsequent assessments and case decisions.
9. Risk assessment documentation would be integrated with the present Uniform Case Record, wherever practical, with particular attention directed toward avoiding redundant case recording.
10. Careful and continuous attention will be directed toward achieving a balance between risk assessment comprehensiveness and workload impact.

11. While attempting to accurately predict the likelihood of future maltreatment is one key component, other important risk assessment objectives include support for:
- the assessment of each child's present safety and the actions necessary to insure their protection
 - the decision to keep a case open following case determination
 - the appropriate selection of treatment services in order to reduce risk of future maltreatment.
 - the decision to close a case based on risk reduction

Although, this correspondence is not intended to represent all the principles and goals which risk assessment may help us achieve, I hope it serves to reinforce the discussions our staff have had over the past two months. I know you are probably anticipating more details regarding the risk assessment instruments. A more detailed correspondence, with Model prototypes, will be sent to you within the next month. At that time, you or your staff's comments will be specifically requested. Until that time, if you or your staff have any questions, please contact your Family and Children Services Regional Office Director or the Division's Risk Assessment Project Director, Barry Salovitz, 1-800-342-3715, extension 30796.

Joseph Semidei
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Family
and Children Services