

Arkansas Division of Children & Family Services Practice Guide Series

How We Do the Work is as Important as the Work We Do

How We Do the Work of Gathering Information to Assess Health & Safety Risk Factors: Closure

Purpose - Provide standard guidance for promising practices when closing the interviews after gathering information to assess immediate danger to children.

Related Policy - Policy II-D

Related Practice Model Principles -

- Safely keep children with their families.
- Enhance well-being in all of our practice with families.
- Safety for children is achieved through positive protective relationships with caring family and community members.

How We Do the Work of Closing the Interviews -

1. Get the parents together, including the children if appropriate (based on the interview results). Tell them what the next steps will be.
2. Let them comment on your statements. Pay close attention to their reactions, both verbal and non-verbal. Don't let the whole process start over – focus on moving forward.
3. Tell them whether you believe immediate intervention/action is necessary to ensure the child's safety while you complete additional investigative activities (collaterals).
4. If you think protective action is needed, ask their help in identifying what that could consist of.
5. Work out a protection plan together, ensuring that it can be monitored.
6. If you determine that immediate protective intervention is not needed, make sure they understand that does not mean the investigation is over or that the allegations are unsubstantiated.
7. Begin the process of identifying services that can be put into place and assess their reactions.

Time Frames -

- Begin investigations of severe maltreatment ***within 24 hours***.
- Begin all other investigations ***within 72 hours***.
- Complete all interviews ***within 30 days*** of receipt of the child maltreatment report.

Documenting - For each safety factor presenting immediate danger, the assessor should include explanation for injury, facts that support or do not support explanation, quotes, worker observations, and other professional assessments as applicable. The assessor should also include documentation and corresponding explanation of risk factors.

Outcomes -

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Resources: 2010 Child Protective Services Training: Structured Decision Making; Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc.