



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**4126 Technology Way – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Carson City, Nevada 89706  
(775) 684-4400**

**Manual Transmission Letter (MTL)  
Family Programs Office: Statewide Policy Manual**

2008 – MTL #0511  
02/25/08

---

**TO:** Barbara Legier, Deputy Director - Division of Child and Family Services – Central Office  
Tom Morton, Director - Clark County Department of Family Services  
Pat Hedgecoth, Social Services Manager V - DCFS – District Offices  
Mike Capello, Director - Washoe County Department of Social Services

**FROM:** Cynthia R. Freeman, Ph.D., Social Services Chief III  
775-684-4410 or [cfreeman@dcfs.state.nv.us](mailto:cfreeman@dcfs.state.nv.us)

---

**POLICY DISTRIBUTION:** Enclosed find the following policy for distribution to all applicable staff within your organization:

- 0511 Risk Assessment Policy

This policy is/was effective 2/20/08 and replaces the following policy(s):

- 0511 Risk Assessment Policy, reformatting revisions copy completed on 11/13/07

Updates to the following areas have been made in this policy (policy page number/summary of change):

- Under Section 0511.5.1 Sentence reading, "Each household where the child resides should be assessed on a separate assessment form" was DELETED and NEW SENTENCE "Each household where the child resides for whom an allegation of abuse or neglect is being investigated should be assessed using separate forms" was added to more clearly reflect intent of policy.

**NOTE:**

- This policy has been placed into the new Family Programs Office Policy Format. Please read the policy in its entirety and note any areas of Jurisdictional Action that are additionally required by your agency to be in compliance with the policy enclosed.
- This is an **All STAFF MEMO** and it is the responsibility of the Agency Director listed above to disseminate the policy enclosed to appropriate staff within his/her organization and to ensure compliance.

## 0511.0 Risk Assessment

### 0511.1 Policy Approval Clearance Record

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Policy Date Effective: 12/15/07	This policy supersedes: 250 Risk Assessment Policy 200 Family Risk and Assessment Protocol	Number of pages in Policy: 7
PART Review & Approval	n/a	Policy Lead: Marji Walker MSW, LSW Caroline Thomas MSW, LSW
DMG Approval	07/17/07 & 7/19/07	Policy Lead: Betsey Crumrine, LC SW
Re-Formatting Revisions	11/13/07	Policy Lead: Betsey Crumrine, LCSW
DMG Approved Revisions	2/20/08	Policy Lead: Betsey Crumrine, LCSW
DMG Approved Revisions		Policy Lead: _____
DCFS Administrator Approval:	07/19/07	Signature: On File
Review by Representative from the Office of the Attorney General:	n/a	Signature:

### 0511.2 Statement of Purpose

**0511.2.1 Policy Statement:** Assessments of Risk must be made at the appropriate case milestones in accordance with Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 432B.180, which states: “An assessment of risk to a child must be conducted and considered as part of each significant decision made in a child welfare case. Those decisions include the provision of child welfare services for the child, from intake through case closure. The assessment must be future-oriented rather than based solely on the child’s injuries or current condition.” See attachment FPO 0509C, Nevada Safety and Risk Assessment Table for specifics.

**0511.2.2 Purpose:** Risk assessment identifies the level of risk of future maltreatment. The level of risk may guide the decision to close a case or promote ongoing services. See chart below.

Table 0511.1 Guide to Risk-Based Service Provision

Risk Level	Substantiated	Inconclusive/ Unsubstantiated
Low	Close or Provide Services, if there are unresolved safety concerns.	Close
Moderate	Close or Provide Services if there are unresolved safety concerns.	Close, or Provide Services if there are unresolved safety concerns
High	Provide Services or Close with Supervisory Approval only	Provide Services, Or close with supervisory approval.
Very High	Provide Services	Provide Services, Or close with supervisory approval.

### 0511.3 Authority

NRS 432B.180, 190, 300, 340  
 NAC 432B.150, 160, 180, 260, 310

## 0511.4 Definitions

### 0511.4.1

**Caregiver Protective Capacities:** Means a parent's or caregiver's strengths or abilities to manage existing safety threats, prevent additional safety threats from arising, or prevent risk influences from creating a safety threat. Protective capacities may be grouped into three different categories that include: cognitive, emotional and behavioral (personal and parenting).

Cognitive protective capacity refers to the parent's ability to recognize hazardous conditions in a child's physical environment or recognize others who may present a threat to a child. Another cognitive capacity is the ability of the caregiver to defer his/her own needs in favor of the child's. It is specific intellect, knowledge, understanding and perception that results in parenting and protective vigilance.

Behavioral protective capacity can include meeting the basic needs of the child and protecting the child from others as needed for child safety. Physical protection might mean the ability to physically isolate the child or to mediate conflicts that could escalate into harmful situations. In addition, the caregiver must address forms of personal behavior or conditions that may contribute to the child being unsafe, such as: alcohol and drug abuse, selection of dangerous partners, and mental health issues. It is specific action, activity, performance that is consistent with and results in parenting and protective vigilance.

Emotional protective capacity refers to the attachment or emotional bond between a child and their parent or caregiver. Attachment constitutes an emotional bond that provides motivation to protect and nurture a child. Consider how the attachment does or does not contribute to the increased safety of the child and the potential impact of disrupted attachment. It is specific feelings, attitudes, identification with a child and motivation that results in parenting and protective vigilance.

### 0511.4.2

**Child Maltreatment:** Encompasses physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Child maltreatment occurs as a result of parenting behavior harmful or destructive to a child's cognitive, emotional, social or physical development.

### 0511.4.3

**Child Welfare Services (CWS):** As defined by NRS 432B.044, includes, without limitation: 1) Protective services, investigations of abuse or neglect and assessments; 2) Foster care services, as defined in NRS 432.010; and 3) Services related to adoption.

### 0511.4.4

**Impending Danger:** A family situation or household member's behavior that is determined to be out-of-control and will likely result in serious harm to a child. [This was previously known as "foreseeable danger"].

### 0511.4.5

**Information Collection Standard:** Refers to the six critical areas that are used for assessing and analyzing family strengths, risk of maltreatment and child safety. This are: 1) surrounding circumstances accompanying the maltreatment; 2) child functioning on a daily basis; 3) adult functioning with respect to daily life management and general adaptation (including mental health functioning and substance usage); 4) disciplinary approaches used by the parent; 5) the overall, typical, pervasive parenting practices; and 6) the extent of maltreatment.

### 0511.4.6

**Nevada Initial Assessment (NIA):** The information gathering process necessary to identify family safety, strengths, and risk of maltreatment.

- 0511.4.7 Nevada Initial Assessment Summary:** The consolidation of the information collected related to the six areas of functioning.
- 0511.4.8 Present Danger:** An immediate, significant, and clearly observable family condition that is actively occurring or “in process” of occurring at the point of contact with a family; and will likely result in serious harm to a child.
- 0511.4.9 Risk Assessment:** The Risk Assessment (based on the Children’s Research Center and California Structured Decision Making Model) identifies families, which have low, moderate, high, or very high probabilities of future abuse or neglect. This assessment does not predict recurrence, but assists the caseworker in assessing whether a family is more or less likely to have another incident without intervention.
- 0511.4.10 Risk of Maltreatment:** The likelihood of future maltreatment based on the current condition of the family. Risk indicates conditions and/or circumstances in a family that contribute to the likelihood of occurrence or re-occurrence of maltreatment.
- 0511.4.11 Safety Assessment:** The process for evaluating family functioning to determine if there are negative family conditions that are out-of-control and therefore pose an imminent safety threat (present or impending danger) to a child.
- 0511.4.12 Safety Assessment Conclusion:** The conclusion that a child is safe or unsafe based upon the assessment of safety threats, and evaluation of child vulnerability and caregiver protective capacities.

## 0511.5 Procedures

### 511.5.1 Scoring the RISK Assessment

The risk assessment is completed based on conditions as they existed at the beginning of the investigation and any risk-related problems that develop/emerge during the course of the investigation. The item scoring should use any information gathered during the course of the investigating unless specifically stated otherwise in the item definition. Each household where the child resides for whom an allegation of abuse or neglect is being investigated should be assessed using separate forms. The Risk Score reflects the risk of maltreatment for all children in the home (See FPO 0511A – RISK Assessment Form (*UNITY document*))

A score for each assessment item is derived from the worker's observation of the characteristics it describes. Some characteristics are very objective and easily derived from case file information (such as prior CA/N history or the age of the child), other characteristics, such as “the primary caretaker provides physical care ...” require the worker to use discretionary judgment and determine a conclusion based on his or her assessment of the family, such as, the primary caretaker provides physical care inconsistent with the child’s needs. Sources of information used to determine the worker's endorsement of an item may include use of statements by the child, caretaker, or collateral persons; worker observations; reports; or other reliable sources to assist in the assessment of each item.

The worker should refer to the Risk Assessment definitions (attachment FPO 0511B) to determine their selection for each item.

After all index items are scored, the total score for each the Abuse and Neglect index will be calculated automatically. The higher of the two scores will be pre-populated into the "scored risk level" box, which appears in window CFS343.

#### 0511.5.2

**Overrides:** There are two types of overrides for the Risk Assessment, 1) Policy Override and 2) Discretionary Override.

**Policy Override:** After determining the scored risk level, the caseworker determines whether any of the policy override reasons exist. Policy overrides reflect incident seriousness and/or child vulnerability concerns, and have been determined by the agency to warrant a risk level designation of very high regardless of the risk level indicated by the assessment tool. Policy overrides require supervisor approval.

If any condition below is applicable in this case that condition would be checked and the override / final risk level would indicate **very high** risk.

Note: (Y) Yes or (N) No, as appropriate for each policy override.

- A. Sexual abuse case AND the perpetrator is likely to have access to the child victim.
- B. Non-accidental injury to a child under age two years.
- C. Severe non-accidental injury, e.g., brain damage, skull or bone fracture, subdural hemorrhage or hematoma, dislocations, sprains, internal injury, poisoning, burns, scalds, severe cuts, or any other physical injury that seriously impairs the health or well-being of the child(ren) which requires medical treatment (historic or current and the family presents with the same risk issues.)
- D. Parent/caretaker action or inaction resulted in death of a child due to abuse or neglect (previous or current).

If a policy override is exercised the adjusted Risk total will appear in the Override Risk Level and Final RISK Level boxes.

**Discretionary Override:** A discretionary override is applied by the caseworker to increase the risk level in any case in which the worker believes that the risk level set by the assessment tool is too low. This may occur when the caseworker is aware of conditions affecting risk that are not captured within the items on the risk assessment. Discretionary overrides may increase the risk level by one unit (for example, from low to moderate OR moderate to high, but NOT from low to high). Discretionary overrides require supervisor approval. After completing the override section, indicate the final risk level, which is the highest of the scored risk level, policy override risk level (which is always very high), or discretionary risk level.

#### 0511.5.2

#### Decision Making

**Case Opening Decisions:** The basis for the decision to open the case for ongoing Child Protective Services must include the following:

- Sufficient information collection related to the 6 Nevada Initial Assessment Areas
- Completion/documentation of the Investigation Summary
- Completion of the Nevada Safety Assessment
- Establishment of a continuing safety plan if appropriate
- Completion of the Risk Assessment

**Case Opening Options:** Once the NIA, Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment have been completed and analysis of caregiver protective capacities, adult functioning and child vulnerability is complete, a determination of present and impending danger can be made.

A. Families that Child Welfare Agencies serve at the conclusion of the Nevada Initial Assessment:

1. Families where children are identified as being unsafe because considerations like, protective capacities and adult functioning are not sufficient to mitigate risk for a vulnerable child.
2. High to Very High risk factors have been assessed.

B. Families that Child Welfare Agencies are not required to serve and cases that can be closed at the conclusion of the Nevada Initial Assessment process:

1. Families where no safety threats have been identified. The results of the Nevada Initial Assessment indicate that there may be the presence of negative conditions perhaps influencing risk of maltreatment, BUT there is NO impending danger.
2. Risk rating is low or moderate (with no identified safety threats).
3. Risk rating is moderate to high, the family refuses voluntary services, and a staffing with the supervisor and/or legal representative document that the agency does not have the ability to intervene through a petition.
4. Risk rating is very high, and a staffing with administration and/or legal representatives document that the agency does not have the ability to intervene through a petition.
5. Supervisors maintain the discretionary judgment to override the decision to not serve a particular family. Based on a review of assessment documentation and consultation with the assigned caseworker, a supervisor may determine that there is a prudent need to provide child welfare services to families where there are risk influences but no safety threats.

**511.5.2**

**Timelines:**

Table 0511.2: Timeline for RISK Assessment Form

Requirement	Deadline	Starting Date	Responsible Party	Actions to be Taken
Complete Risk Assessment Form	Before conclusion of each investigation. and within 45 days of the report	After NIA is complete.	CPS investigator	Complete RISK assessment on each household in which the child resides, prior to concluding all CPS investigations.

**0511.5.3 Forms:**

- A. FPO 0511A: RISK Assessment Form is a UNITY document. A paper copy of the RISK Assessment is provided as an attachment for informational purposes only.**
1. There are 4 required UNITY screens that must be filled out in order to complete a RISK Assessment form.
  2. RISK Assessment Form Definitions: See Attachment FPO 0511B.

**0511.6 Jurisdictional Action**

**0511.6.1 Development of Internal Policies:** None needed. All three jurisdictions must follow this statewide collaborative policy as written.

**0511.6.2 Timelines:** None

**0511.6.3 Tools & Forms:** All three jurisdictions are expected to use the RISK Assessment Form in conjunction with this policy.

**0511.6.4 Documentation:** The Risk Assessment form is to be completed in UNITY by the caseworker before the conclusion of each investigation and within 45 days of the report of harm to the CWS agency.

**A. Case File Documentation (paper):** None required

**B. UNITY Documentation (electronic):**

Table 0511.4: UNITY Documentation for RISK Assessment

Applicable UNITY Screen	Data Required
CFS 343	RISK Assessment
CFS044	Investigation Detail
CFS045	Determine of Investigation Status
CFS047	Investigation Directory

Table 0511.3: UNITY Documentation for Ongoing Assessments of Risk

Applicable UNITY Screen	Data Required
CFS 085	Case notes
CFS 086	Case Notes Directory
Examples of possible note types where ongoing assessment of risk could be documented include:	Care Provider Note Child Contact Note Case Plan Meeting Note Child and Family Team Meeting (CFT) Note

**0511.6.5 Supervisory Responsibility:** None

## 0511.7 State Responsibilities

### 0511.7.1 Participants in Policy Development

- A. **FPO Staff:** CPS Investigative, FPO Specialists
- B. **Jurisdictional Representatives:** CPS Directors, Managers, Supervisors
- C. **External Stakeholders:** None

### 0511.7.2 Technical Assistance:

- A. **Requesting Technical Assistance:** Children's Research Center
- B. **Relaying TA Information:** Children's Research Center
- C. **Evidenced Based Practice:** Children's Research Center

### 0511.7.3 Clearance Process

- A. Approved by DMG on 7/17/07.

### 0511.7.4 State Oversight

- A. Compliance with this policy will be monitored via the State's oversight methodology.

## 0511.8 Policy Cross Reference

- 0506** Nevada Initial Assessment
- 0510** Nevada Safety Assessment

## 0511.9 Attachments

- FPO 0511A** – RISK Assessment Form (*UNITY document*)
- FPO 0511B** – RISK Assessment Form Definitions
- FPO 0509C** – Nevada Safety and Risk Assessment Table