

What is a Safety Statement?



CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEET

Safety Statements within the TRF

The Tasmanian Risk Framework (TRF) provides an evidence-based set of guides to professional information gathering, analysis and judgement regarding the impact and risk of abuse or neglect to children. It is adapted from the Victorian Risk Framework (VRF) and it guides all decisions made about children who become involved with Child Protection Services.

The Safety Statement is put together at the end of an assessment using the TRF and is one of the most crucial aspects of work in child protection. The Safety Statement is used by Child Protection Workers to explain the risk judgement to families, children, young people, senior workers, managers, the courts and other agencies.

The Safety Statement is the record of the Child Protection Worker's judgement of the significance of harm based on the analysis using the TRF. The third and final phase of the risk assessment process requires the Child Protection Worker to make a judgement about the level of risk to the child or young person.

This means that workers have to demonstrate that parents have (or have not) protected, or are unlikely to protect their children and that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of the type of abuse they have experienced.

The Safety Statement documents the judgement of risk including:

- **CONSEQUENCES for the child of the abuse**
- **PROBABILITY of the harm occurring or re-occurring**

Judgements are then made about the significance of the harm consequence and harm probability for:

- **Immediate safety**
- **Future risk**

What does a Safety Statement document look like?

The core element of the Safety Statement document is a four-part statement. Each part represents an essential feature of the risk assessment.

The Safety Statement will draw on facts in the case that clearly support why a particular level of harm consequence has been selected. The case **facts** that support the assessment must be considered. The **vulnerability** of the individual child must also be considered in the judgement.

Judgements will have been discussed with a senior worker and the four parts cover:

- ✓ **Harm Consequence**
- ✓ **Harm Probability**
- ✓ **Immediate Safety**
- ✓ **Future Risk**

Developed in consultation with the Department of Education and other government and community services that work with children, young people and families – Approved for distribution February 2006

What should be in the Safety Statement?

The **FIRST PART** of the Safety Statement relates to the **harm consequence**. This is rated according to the following categories:

Extreme: ie the impact on the child/ young person is extreme, enduring and deteriorating and likely to result in permanent damage, **or**

Serious: The impact on the child/ young person is observable, ongoing and/or intrusive to functioning or health, **or**

Concerning: The impact of harm is immediate, isolated and not persisting.

How is 'Harm Probability' rated?

The **SECOND PART** of the Safety Statement relates to the **harm probability**. This is rated according to the following categories:

Highly likely: ie At least one of the following is present at a high level or a number are present at moderate levels:-

- Immediate significant harm
- Pattern of escalating harm-causing behaviour
- The child or young person is highly vulnerable
- The caregiver has negative beliefs about the child
- The functioning of carer/young person acts against providing sufficient protection or care
- Lack of capacity, willingness or pattern of engaging with supports or services, **or**

Likely: ie as for 'highly likely' but at a moderate to low level at present, or protective factors are present but untested or insufficiently tested, **or**

Unlikely: ie a multiple of the following indicators are present:-

- No pattern of escalating harm-causing behaviour
- Lack of vulnerability: age/presence of protective adult/able and willing to protect self
- Beliefs: good view of child/acknowledgement of problem
- Family strengths and resources demonstrated as protection
- Capable and willing to engage with services
- Pattern of approaching or engaging with supports
- Protective factors operating and sustained

The **THIRD PART** of the Safety Statement clearly outlines the **immediate safety issues** and how they can, or are, being addressed.

The **FINAL PART** of the Safety Statement identifies **future risk** issues for the child or young person. By identifying future risk issues, it is emphasised where attention will be directed in the future if necessary to achieve sustained safety for the child. If the Safety Statement concludes that the future risk issues need to be addressed in order to reduce the risk level to the child, it will serve as the benchmark for future case planning decisions and actions.