



### **Key Concepts:** *“Present Danger and Impending Danger”*

Threats of danger are manifested differently. Threats of danger may occur as present danger or impending danger.

As used in the Oregon Child Welfare Safety Model the term **Present Danger** refers to an immediate, significant and clearly observable harm or threat of severe harm occurring to a child in the present and requiring immediate CPS protective response, called a protective action.

**Present Danger** exists at the highest safety threshold. Present danger is also the easiest to detect because it is totally transparent and happening right in front of you. Threats of danger that are consistent with the present danger threshold include conditions such as:

### **Present Danger Threshold**

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- Hitting, beating, severely depriving now
- Injuries to the face and head
- Premeditated maltreatment
- Life threatening living arrangements
- Bizarre cruelty toward a child
- Bizarre/extreme viewpoint of a child
- Vulnerable children who are left unsupervised or alone now
- Child extremely afraid of home situation
- Child needing immediate medical care
- Caregiver unable to provide basic care



As used in the Oregon Child Welfare Safety Model, the term **Impending Danger** refers to a state of danger in which family conditions, behaviors, attitudes, motives, emotions and/or situations are out of control. While the danger may not be currently active, it can be anticipated to cause harm to a child at any time.

Commonly, impending danger threats to child safety are not obvious. They also are not occurring at the onset of CPS intervention or in a present context but are identified and understood more fully upon an assessment and evaluation of individual and family functioning and conditions. Without safety intervention, impending danger threats could reasonably lead to harm.

Our ability to explain the specifics of what we've observed as a threat of danger requires a full and effective study of the family.

### Identifying Impending Danger

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- Threatening family conditions that are not obvious, active or occurring when you first arrive.
- Conditions are out of control and likely to cause harm to a child in the near future (which is any time during the next several days).
- If something is not happening before your eyes -- like present danger threats -- it will take time and effort to understand individual and family dynamics.
- By conducting effective assessments, impending danger can be exposed and understood.

Therefore, the Oregon Child Welfare Safety Model requires CPS workers to complete a safety analysis at the conclusion of the CPS assessment in order to determine impending danger and to establish safety management plans to assure protection.

For more information about **Present** and **Impending Danger**, you are encouraged to reference the Child Welfare Procedure Manual, Chapter 2, Assessment, Section 5, A&B, and Chapter 3,



Section 14, A. The Procedure Manual can be found at [http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/safety\\_model/index.html#pm](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/safety_model/index.html#pm)

**Definitions from Oregon Child Welfare Administrative Rule that support these concepts are as follows:**

**Harm** means any kind of impairment, damage, detriment, or injury to a child's physical, sexual, emotional, or mental development or functioning. Harm is the result of child abuse or neglect and may vary from mild to severe.

**Out of control** means family behaviors, conditions, or circumstances that can affect a child are unrestrained, unmanaged, without limits or monitoring, not subject to the influence or manipulation within the control of the family, resulting in an unpredictable and chaotic family environment.

**Protective action** means an immediate, same day, short-term plan sufficient to protect a child from a safety threat in order to allow completion of the CPS assessment.

**Safety threat** means family behavior, conditions, or circumstances that could result in harm to a child.

**Severe Harm** means 'substantial,' as used in ORS 419B.005; immobilizing impairment; life-threatening damage; or significant or acute injury to a child's physical, sexual, psychological, or mental development or functioning.

**Unsafe** means there is a safety threat to which the child is vulnerable and there is insufficient parent or caregiver protective capacity to protect a vulnerable child from the identified safety threats.

**Vulnerable Child** means a child who is unable to protect him or herself. This includes a child who is dependent on others for sustenance and protection. A vulnerable child is defenseless, exposed to behavior, conditions, or circumstances that he or she is powerless to manage, and is susceptible and accessible to a threatening parent or caregiver. Vulnerability is judged according to physical and emotional development, ability to communicate needs, mobility, size, and dependence.