



Key Concepts: *“Safety Threats/Safety Threshold” and “Child Vulnerability”*

As used in the Oregon Child Welfare Safety Model, the term Safety Threat is broadly defined as **“family behavior, conditions or circumstances that could result in harm to a child.”** In the context of the **CPS Assessment** or **Face-to-Face Contact** with the family, there are specific factors to consider when determining the presence of a safety threat. When all of the first four factors on the list below are present, a safety threat exists. When there is a vulnerable child present in the context of these first four factors, the “safety threshold” has been crossed.

Safety Threshold Criteria

- A family condition is out-of-control
- A family condition is likely to result in harm
- The severe effect is imminent: reasonably could happen soon
- The family condition is observable and can be clearly described and articulated
- There is a vulnerable child

For more information about **Safety Threats** you are encouraged to reference the Child Welfare Procedure Manual, Chapter 2, Assessment, Section 5 and Appendix 2.4; **Safety Threshold**, Chapter 2, Assessment, Section 5 and Appendix 2.4; and **Child Vulnerability**, Chapter 2, Assessment, Section 6. The Procedure Manual can be found at 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:

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.

Observable means specific, definite, real, can be seen and described. Observable does not include suspicion and gut feeling.

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

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.