

Information gathering prompts

The child

Child's vulnerability, such as:

- their age
- stage of development, including any developmental delays
- high-risk behaviour (for a young person),
- behaviour that challenges the parent
- medical, health or disability needs.

Immediate safety of child – current whereabouts/last sighted.

Disclosure (any statements made by the child about the alleged harm).

Child's physical appearance (including any injuries).

Child's functioning, emotional and behavioural presentation, and/or developmental ability.

For a young person, information about substance use, involvement with Youth Justice.

Involvement with services, such as education (school), childcare, community or health agencies.

The child's strengths identified support network, and life skills appropriate to age.

Additional information about a child under 2 years

Pre-natal experiences, birth, sleeping arrangements/practices and circumstances of the pregnancy.

Any additional vulnerabilities such prematurity, complex health or care needs.

The parents

Age and level of maturity of the parent/s.

Parents' own experiences of childhood abuse.

Parents' response or attitudes to the allegations. Is it consistent with the facts?

Parents' relationship with the child, attachment, expectations and perception of the child.

Parent's level of care, supervision and discipline of the child.

Stressors in the family, including financial, health, isolation, unemployment, housing or family law disputes, that are impacting on parental capacity or safety.

Intellectual or physical disability or health issue.

Mental health problems – past or current / treatment.

Substance misuse – impacts of use on functioning and parenting.

Threats to kill or harm child.

Information about the parents' ability and willingness to protect the child, including their actions or inactions contributing to the harm/risk of harm to the child

Criminal history that is relevant to the child.

Parenting orders that may be in place.

Domestic and family violence (DFV)

Is a parent experiencing or using DFV and/or coercive and controlling behaviour?

Lethality and high-risk factors present—strangulation/choking, threats to kill, access to weapons, recent separation/pregnancy or new birth.

Immediate safety of the person experiencing violence and the children.

Types of violence (physical, emotional, sexual, financial, coercion and control) and any escalation of violence over time.

Impacts of the violence on the child.

Family history of the person using violence and the person experiencing violence, including any Domestic Violence Orders relating to previous partners – current, past, conditions, any breaches, any prison time.

Whether the person experiencing violence is prevented from protecting their child.

Ways that the person using violence may be influencing other behaviours of the person experiencing violence, such as enabling access to substances, interfering with access to support or resources.

History of DFV in the relationship.

The abuse, harm, or risk of harm

Type and significance of harm. Description, circumstances, frequency, severity and chronicity of harm – number of incidents, any pattern, location and nature of injuries, whether harm is escalating, whether weapons/implements used, child’s behaviours.

Any immediate danger for the child.

Has an infant or young child been shaken or sustained suspicious injuries? (for example, bruising on an immobile infant)

Access to the child by the alleged person/s responsible.

Impacts of the harm—injury, risk of death, lasting damage, impact on health or development.

Child protection history:

- whether this type of abuse has occurred before, whether the child has suffered harm previously as a result, and who was responsible
- whether the child has suffered harm in the past, as a result of other types of abuse (and who was responsible)
- who has been responsible for protecting the child in the past, including how they have protected the child
- whether the person alleged responsible for harm now, has caused harm to any other child in the past
- what patterns of behaviour can be identified, including information about frequency and severity?

Consider all child protection history, not just information that has met the threshold of a notification or where a child has been found to be harmed.

Any cumulative impact of the child’s experiences on their physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.

Family and cultural context

The connection to culture and community for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child and their parents and how this connection contributes to protection for the child. Consider the role of extended family and community in raising the child.

Religious, spiritual or cultural related factors that need to be considered regarding parenting and child rearing practices? Need for an interpreter?

Strengths and resilience. Consider supportive intra and extra familial relationships and the family's ability to access supports and resources.

What does this support look like and what do these people do to help the parent keep the child safe?

The environment

Household composition (such as single parent household, non-biological parent) and the size of the household.

Does the family have adequate resources such as income and stable housing, to meet the child's needs?

Is the family mobile, transient or likely to flee to avoid contact? Are the living arrangements hazardous or unsafe?

Strengths

Are the parents engaged with any support services (currently or in the past)?

Do the parents express a desire to change what is currently happening in the home?

Has a parent taken any actions to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing?

Do the parents have friends or family that come to the home to assist with the child's care?

Does the child have friends or family members close by that they can stay with?

Acts of protection

Do the parents make proactive decisions for alternate care for the child to ensure they are not exposed to harm

Do the parents access trusted family and community members who offer safe childcare and practical supports such as food and money?

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