

# Home Visitor Safety



Training Companion to Home  
Visitation Safety Guidelines  
Family Assessment



# Presenter

Suzy Gibson, M.S.  
MCH Consultant

Oklahoma State Department of Health

Contact Phone: 405-271-7611

Email: [SusanEG@health.ok.gov](mailto:SusanEG@health.ok.gov)



# Important Note

When utilizing the guidelines provided in this training and the entire Safety Manual, it is important to remember the context in which they will be used. Safety considerations may vary from location to location as well as from situation to situation. For example, safety issues in rural areas may differ somewhat from safety issues in urban areas. Because each community is unique, the safety issues encountered in that community may also be unique. With regard to safety issues, there are other factors, in addition to context, that may need to be considered. Those factors include agency policies and procedures as well as current state laws.

Safety guidelines often need to be adapted and/or expanded to address the specific concerns of each location or situation. Supervisory sessions provide an appropriate venue for discussion of specific safety concerns and fine-tuning of safety procedures. The supervisor should be available and immediately informed if the home visitor fears for his/her safety. The safety of the home visitor is of utmost importance. The focus of this manual and training is to provide general guidelines to enhance understanding and awareness of safety issues for home visitors.



# Training Objectives

Participants will identify and understand:

- How to assess families for strengths and needs, and provide appropriate referrals
- To promote healthy child growth and development
- To enhance family functioning
- To promote positive parent-child relationships



# Initial Assessment 1

## ■ Childhood history

- Look for nurturing and consistent parenting or lack thereof, as a child.
- Did the parent perceive themselves as abused?
- How was the parent punished as a child?
- Did the parent ever witness any domestic violence, abuse of a sibling or alcohol/drug abuse?



# Initial Assessment 2

- Parent has criminal, mental illness, or substance abuse history
  - Listen for any indication that drinking or drug use is a problem for the family
  - Look for current mental health problems
  - Look for patterns of criminal activity or substance abuse



# Initial Assessment 3

- Parent suspected of abuse in the past
  - Does the parent has a current of past history with CPS?
  - Has there been an official report made?
  - Have the children been removed or placed in foster care?



# Initial Assessment 4

- Low self-esteem, social isolation, depression, no lifelines
  - Listen for the presence of a usable and easily accessible support system, poor coping skills, social isolation and depression
  - Things to cover include education level, prenatal care, transportation, phone, child care and work history





# Initial Assessment 5

## ■ Multiple crises or stresses

- Look for the level of stress the parent has in the areas of work environment, housing/living conditions, and financial situations
- Look for relationship discord, multiple separations, threats of divorce, frequent moves or changes in jobs
- Look for indication that the parent may be overwhelmed by the demands of a new baby



# Initial Assessment 6

- Violent temper outbursts/potential for violence
  - Look for violent temper outbursts in either parent toward each other, children, or others.



# Initial Assessment 7

- Rigid and unrealistic expectation of child
  - Look for rigid or unrealistic expectation of the child's behavior and concern of parent only for his/her needs rather than the baby's needs



# Initial Assessment 8

## ■ Harsh punishment of child

- Listen for parents' use of physical punishment in the first year of life
- Does the parent feel the child deserves punishment?
- Elicit exactly how the parent will discipline and at what age they expect to begin disciplining children.



# Initial Assessment 9

- Child difficult and/or provocative as perceived by parents
  - Look for the parents' perception of the baby
  - Does the parent think the baby will be a lot of trouble?
  - Does the parent view the child's behavior as a normal part of the growth process?



# Initial Assessment 10

- Child unwanted or at risk for poor bonding
  - Listen for parent speaking warmly about their baby
  - Are there certain characteristics the baby must have if the parent is going to love him/her?
  - Look for risk factors for poor bonding: premature baby, baby born with defects or very ill, step-child or adopted child, or any hospitalization for longer than one week after birth



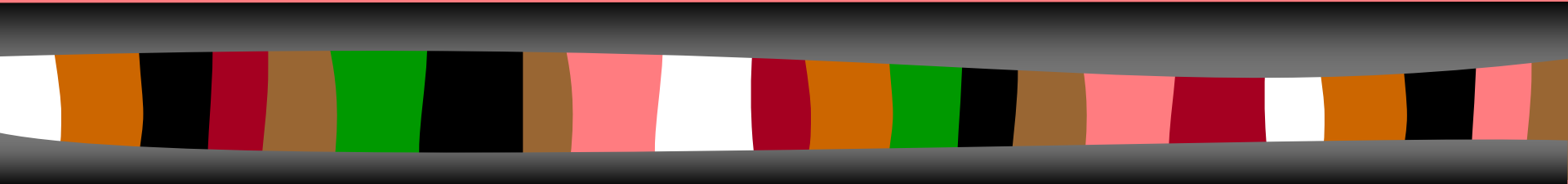
# Initial Assessment 11

For a family with any of these factors, immediately staff to determine appropriate services and precautions:

- Current/past criminal history
- Current/past severe mental illness
- Current/past violence and/or safety concerns

*These may not always be reported or evident at first but could emerge later.*

# Contributors to the Power Point Training Section



Terrie Blackaby, OCCHD/OSDH  
Kathie Burnett, OSDH  
Barbara Fyffe, Parent Child Center of Tulsa  
Nelda Ramsey, OKDHS  
Debbie Richardson, OSU  
Cathy Sullivan, TCCHD, OSDH  
Julie Young, ODMHSAS  
Sherie Trice, OSDH