PRESENT DANGER

Present danger is an immediate, significant, clearly observable family condition occurring in the present tense, endangering or threatening to endanger a child; therefore requiring a prompt child protective response.

The definition of present danger should be taken to mean that such a circumstance requires an immediate, same-day investigative or case manager protective action.
KEY WORDS IN PRESENT DANGER

Immediate
This means that what is happening in the family is happening right before your eyes. You are in the midst of the danger the child is subject to. The threatening family condition is in operation. Its effects can result at any moment.

Significant
Referring to a family condition, this means that the nature of what is out of control and immediately threatening to a child is onerous, vivid, impressive, and notable.

Can you get the feeling for what we are saying here about significant?

The family condition exists as a dominant matter that must be dealt with.
Clearly Observable

Present danger family conditions are totally transparent. You see and experience them. There is no guess work. A rule of thumb is: If you have to interpret what is going on, then it likely is not a present danger.

For example: Situations that involve present danger are hitting, fighting, serious injury, intoxicated or passed out, suicidal, etc.
Impending Danger Threats

...are negative family conditions and/or circumstances and/or caregiver behaviors; emotions; attitudes; perceptions; etc. that are out of control in the presence of a vulnerable child and therefore likely to have severe effects on a child at any time in the near future (in the next few days).

Impending Danger refers to a child being in a continuous state of danger and those threats pose a specific threat of severe harm to the child.
Impending danger threats are often not immediately apparent and may not be active and threatening child safety upon initial contact with a family.

Impending danger threats are often subtle and can be more challenging to detect without sufficient contact and information collection with the family and others.

Identifying impending danger threats require thorough information collection regarding family/caregiver functioning to sufficiently assess and understand how family conditions occur.
A threshold is a cut-off point when something ceases to be one thing and crosses over into something else that is categorically different and has different implications in terms of how it is experienced.

The same symbolization is true when considering negative family conditions that, as they are becoming worse, eventually cross over or change from something that is generally negative to a condition, circumstance or behavior that is specifically dangerous and unsafe to a child.
When gathering and analyzing information during the Family Functioning Assessment, it is necessary to differentiate between:

- Family conditions, circumstances, & behaviors that have a negative quality but don't threaten child safety, &
- Those conditions in a family that have crossed the safety threshold and are imminently dangerous.
There are five criteria for determining when a negative family condition meets the safety threshold for impending danger: observable, out of control, vulnerable, severity, and imminence.

All five criteria must be met in order for a family condition, circumstance, behavior, emotion, circumstance to pose an impending danger to a child.
SAFETY THRESHOLD CRITERIA

1) A family condition is **out of control**
2) A family condition is likely to result in a **severe** effect.
3) The severe effect is **imminent**: reasonably could happen in proximate time—soon.
4) The family condition is **observable** and can be clearly described and articulated.
5) There is a child who is **vulnerable** to specific identified safety threat.
DANGER THRESHOLD DEFINITIONS

**Observable:**
Refers to family behaviors, conditions or situations representing a danger to a child that are specific, definite, real, can be seen and understood and are subject to being reported and justified.

The criterion “observable” does not include suspicion, intuitive feelings, difficulties in worker-family interaction, lack of cooperation, or difficulties in obtaining information.
Vulnerable Child:
Refers to a child who is dependent on others for protection and is exposed to circumstances that she or he is powerless to manage and susceptible, accessible, & available to a threatening person and/or persons in authority over them.

Vulnerability is judged according to age; physical and emotional development; ability to communicate needs; mobility; size and dependence & susceptibility.

This definition also includes all young children from 0-6 & older children who, for whatever reason, are not able to protect themselves or seek help from others.
Out-of-Control:
Refers to family behavior, conditions or situations which are unrestrained resulting in an unpredictable and possibly chaotic family environment not subject to the influence, manipulation, or ability within the family’s control.

Such out-of-control family conditions pose a danger and are not being managed by anybody or anything internal to the family system.
DANGER THRESHOLD DEFINITIONS

Imminent:
Refers to the belief that dangerous family behaviors, conditions, or situations will remain active or become active within the next several days to a couple of weeks.

This is consistent with a degree of certainty or inevitability that danger and severe harm are possible, even likely outcomes, without intervention.
Severity:

Refers to the effects of maltreatment that have already occurred and/or the potential for harsh effects based on the vulnerability of a child & the family behavior, condition or the potential for harsh effects based on the vulnerability of a child and the family behavior, condition or situation that is out of control.

As far as danger is concerned, the safety threshold is consistent with severe harm. Severe harm includes such effects as serious physical injury, disability, terror and extreme fear, impairment and death. The safety threshold is in line with family conditions that reasonably could result in harsh and unacceptable pain and suffering for a vulnerable child.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT NEGATIVE FAMILY CONDITIONS?

Qualifiers…
◊ Duration: How long?
◊ Consistency: How often?
◊ Pervasiveness: What is the extent?
◊ Influence: What stimulates behavior?
◊ Effect: What is the impact?
◊ Continuance: How likely?
WHEN YOU IDENTIFY A NEGATIVE CONDITION, YOU SHOULD SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE FOLLOWING:

1) How long the condition has been concerning or problematic?
2) How often is the negative condition actively a problem or affecting caregiver performance?
3) The extent or intensity of the problem and how consuming it is to caregiver functioning and overall family functioning?
4) What stimulates or causes the threat to child safety to become active?
5) What affect does the negative condition have specifically on the ability of a caregiver to provide for the care and protection of children?
6) How likely is the negative condition to continue or get worse without CPS intervention?
CAREGIVER PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES

Personal and parenting behavioral, cognitive and emotional characteristics that specifically and directly can be associated with being protective of one's young.
What you notice here is that we are referring to caregiver characteristics that are very specific with respect to how they contribute to being protective.

For those of you who are parents, consider yourself for a moment:

“What characteristics, qualities, “strengths” do you possess that enable you to keep your kids safe?”

“What differentiates you from the parents we serve?”

“What keeps you from coming into the system?”
Protective capacities are finite.

There are not an infinite number of personal or parenting characteristics that apply to being protective.

We can observe and recognize the characteristics.

We can also single them out so that we can work with caregivers to expand or address them.

Protective capacities as a concept provide specific direction and content for what must be addressed in our service and/or treatment plan.
BEHAVIORAL PROTECTIVE CAPACITY

Specific action, activity, performance that is consistent with and results in parenting & protective vigilance.
BEHAVIORAL PROTECTIVE CAPACITY

Here we see specific stuff getting done. These characteristic are readily observable. This includes an established history of behavior that is protective.

Even though we focus on what is going on now, we remain interested in past performance.

What does it take to act and perform?

It takes energy and health, robustness, spontaneity, execution, and let’s not forget that behavior typically is associated with and follows thought and feeling.

Emphasize: This may be related to a caregiver’s ability to control their impulses—set his/her own needs aside in favor of the child’s needs.
COGNITIVE PROTECTIVE CAPACITY

Specific intellect, knowledge, understanding and perception that results in parenting & protective vigilance.
COGNITIVE PROTECTIVE CAPACITY

We should be able to know about the thinking part of being a parent. We should be able to observe it & describe cognitive protective capacities. This is about mental operations that empower a person to take responsibility and action.

While values and beliefs likely have an emotional component, we place them within the cognitive domain since they represent more of a strength to the extent a person is aware of them and makes decisions about their importance. It has to do with someone’s mental wherewithal, their perceptions and reality orientation. In other words, a caregiver’s thought process. Remember this is the capacity that includes “being alert” to danger.
EMOTIONAL PROTECTIVE CAPACITY

Specific feelings, attitudes, identification with a child and motivation that results in parenting and protective vigilance.
Emotional protective capacities seem more personal as if it applies to the very nature of who the person is; this might be the instinctual side of protectiveness similar to the protective “she-wolf.”

This is value laden in the sense that a parent holds special values of the importance and meaning the child has for them and the extent to what they are willing to do for the child.

Emotional protective capacities have to do with the emotional bond and attachment that inherently motivates a caregiver to be protective.
MANAGING IMPENDING DANGER

The least intrusive response to controlling and managing impending danger involves the decision regarding whether a non-maltreating caregiver can protect a child.

If there is a non-maltreating caregiver who has sufficient caregiver protective capacities to manage impending danger, then the decision is that children are safe.

Therefore the implication for the investigator is clear...

- The evaluation of a non-maltreating caregiver’s capacity & willingness to protect the child must be highly rigorous & thorough.
- The same rigor that goes into the identification of impending danger must also apply to the identification of existing or diminished caregiver protective capacities.
Consistent with our responsibilities for safety management, the analysis must be such that it results in a high degree of confidence about your assessment of the caregiver’s intention and capacity.

A caregiver’s word is insufficient to select this option.

Remember the definition for child safety is the absence of threats or sufficient caregiver protective capacity to protect the child.

At the end of the day, do you believe that the caregivers are able and will carry out the responsibility?
That's all Folks!