

SDM® SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Policy & Procedures Manual



**Minnesota Adult
Protection Services**

March 2026

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ABOUT EVIDENT CHANGE

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SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Minnesota Adult Protection Services

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Adult protection services (APS) should make diligent efforts to engage in safety planning with the adult, support the adult in understanding the imminent danger factors that are present, and work with any resistance from the adult. The APS worker should engage the adult, their support system, and other important collaterals in understanding the imminent danger factors that are present and ensure that the adult is able to understand the options that may mitigate danger and the consequences of refusing to make change or accept services.

SECTION 1. IMMINENT DANGER FACTORS

Assess the household/facility for each of the following factors to indicate the presence of imminent danger to the adult. Based on all information known and available at the time of assessment completion, select each factor that applies.

- 1. An incident of sexual assault is alleged, and the adult has not received a sexual assault examination; OR the adult is likely to be sexually assaulted.
- 2. The adult is likely to or will continue to be physically abused.
- 3. The adult has an illness or condition AND no way to obtain necessary medical care, which will likely result in serious injury, harm, or loss of health requiring medical care by a physician.
- 4. The adult has no food or water AND no way to obtain food or water, which will likely result in serious injury, harm, or loss of health requiring medical care by a physician.
- 5. The adult does not meet their own needs for necessary care and supervision, AND they are unable or unwilling to obtain necessary care; which will likely result in serious injury, harm, or loss of health requiring medical care by a physician.
- 6. The adult is dependent on a service or support that does not meet their needs for necessary care or supervision, which will likely result in serious injury, harm, or loss of health requiring medical care by a physician.
- 7. The adult is experiencing environmental hazards that will likely result in serious injury, harm, or loss of health requiring medical care by a physician.
- 8. The adult's resources are being mismanaged or misappropriated, AND there is an immediate concern for protecting assets from fraud or theft.
- 9. Other imminent danger factor. Describe: _____
- None of the factors apply. The adult is not in imminent danger. Continue to Section 3.**

IF ANY IMMINENT DANGER FACTORS ARE SELECTED, CONTINUE TO SECTION 2.

SECTION 2. RECOMMENDED IMMEDIATE SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

This section is required if any imminent danger factors were identified in Section 1.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Select all interventions recommended by the worker to mitigate identified imminent danger factors; then, indicate whether the interventions were implemented.

APS should make diligent efforts to engage the adult and their primary supports in safety planning; understand the adult’s perspective and goals; support the adult in understanding the impacts on their goals, life, and safety from imminent danger factors; and identify and address the adult’s and/or primary supports’ concerns about recommended interventions. The APS worker should support the adult in understanding intervention options that may mitigate danger and in understanding the consequences of these options. This includes making sure the adult understands the potential impacts on the adult’s life, health, or safety that would occur from refusing or accepting changes and services (if able to do so).

INTERVENTIONS OFFERED	IMPLEMENTED
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Emergency Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Emergency Hold	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Health and Welfare Check	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Law Enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Medical Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Mental Health Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Restraining Order for Removal of Person Alleged Responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Sexual Assault Examination and Treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Sought Legal Authority to Remove the Adult	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Support System Engaged	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Transaction Hold	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Unique Service. Describe:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are all selected imminent danger factors mitigated by implemented interventions? Yes No

Comments:

SECTION 3. SAFETY DECISION

The safety decision is determined based on whether imminent danger factors were identified and whether implemented interventions can mitigate them. There are three possible safety decisions.

- **Safe. No imminent danger factors were identified at this time.** Based on currently available information, the adult is not likely to be in imminent danger of serious harm from maltreatment.

- **Conditionally safe. Interventions were sufficient to ensure safety.** One or more imminent danger factors are present. Safety interventions have been recommended, and necessary services to mitigate danger of serious harm from maltreatment have been implemented.

- **Unsafe. Insufficient interventions to ensure safety.** One or more imminent danger factors are present. Safety interventions have been recommended or implemented but are unable to successfully mitigate the imminent danger factors. This adult will likely be in imminent danger of serious harm from maltreatment.

SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT DEFINITIONS

Minnesota Adult Protection Services

SECTION 1. IMMINENT DANGER FACTORS

Imminent danger factors help workers assess whether the adult is in danger of imminent harm from maltreatment. *Per Minnesota policy, imminent danger is when the adult's current circumstances as assessed by the worker identify that a loss of health, assault, serious injury, or death could occur in a short time (e.g., within a week).*

1. AN INCIDENT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IS ALLEGED, AND THE ADULT HAS NOT RECEIVED A SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMINATION; OR THE ADULT IS LIKELY TO BE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.

- An incident of sexual assault is alleged, AND a sexual assault examination has not yet been completed. Examples of indicators include but are not limited to the following.
 - » The adult's disclosure of sexual abuse either verbally or behaviorally (e.g., unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, sudden change in affect, unusual depression, sexualized behavior, fearfulness, or indirect disclosures).
 - » Medical findings that are consistent with sexual contact or sexually transmitted disease.
 - » Physical evidence or injury indicating possible sexual abuse.

OR

- Observable evidence or credible threats lead the worker to believe the adult is likely to be sexually assaulted. Examples include but are not limited to the following.
 - » The adult disclosed sexual abuse or threat of sexual abuse by a person who still has access to the adult.
 - » Sexual abuse is suspected, and the person suspected responsible still has access to the adult.

2. THE ADULT IS LIKELY TO OR WILL CONTINUE TO BE PHYSICALLY ABUSED.

Observable evidence or credible threats lead the worker to believe the adult is likely to or will continue to be physically abused. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- The adult sustained a non-accidental physical injury by another person who still has access to the adult. Example of injuries include but are not limited to the following.
 - » Bone fractures
 - » Bruises
 - » Dislocations

- » Sprains
 - » Internal injuries
 - » Poisoning
 - » Burns or scalds
 - » Severe cuts
- The explanation for an observed injury to the adult is questionable or inconsistent with the type of injury, and the nature of the injury suggests that the adult's safety is of concern.
 - Someone has threatened to cause serious harm to or retaliate against the adult.
 - Unauthorized physical restraints were used on the adult.
 - Unauthorized chemical restraints were used on the adult.
 - Unprescribed medications were provided to the adult, or the adult was administered prescribed or over-the-counter medications inappropriately to the extent that harm is likely.
 - A support expresses frustration about their ability to manage the adult's needs without maltreating the adult, and/or they express the need for immediate relief from taking care of the adult.

3. THE ADULT HAS AN ILLNESS OR CONDITION AND NO WAY TO OBTAIN NECESSARY MEDICAL CARE, WHICH WILL LIKELY RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY, HARM, OR LOSS OF HEALTH REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE BY A PHYSICIAN.

The adult is likely to experience imminent harm, serious injury, or loss of health as a result of an illness or condition they are not receiving necessary medical care for. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- Critical medical treatment, directives, or use of required assistive devices are not being adhered to, resulting in an urgent life-threatening situation or immediate risk of loss of health and function.
- The adult has been exposed to poison, carbon monoxide, or other potentially fatal substances such as street drugs.
- The adult is suicidal, and no protective action has been taken.

4. THE ADULT HAS NO FOOD OR WATER AND NO WAY TO OBTAIN FOOD OR WATER, WHICH WILL LIKELY RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY, HARM, OR LOSS OF HEALTH REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE BY A PHYSICIAN.

The adult is likely to experience imminent harm, serious injury, or loss of health as a result of their lack of access to OR inability to obtain food or water. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- The adult has no food or water in their residence and no plan or support to obtain food or water.
- Adult's minimum nutritional needs are not met, resulting in danger to the adult's health and/or safety.

- The adult appears malnourished or dehydrated.

5. THE ADULT DOES NOT MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS FOR NECESSARY CARE AND SUPERVISION, AND THEY ARE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO OBTAIN NECESSARY CARE; WHICH WILL LIKELY RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY, HARM, OR LOSS OF HEALTH REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE BY A PHYSICIAN.

The adult is likely to experience imminent harm, serious injury, or loss of health as a result of their inability or unwillingness to meet their own needs for necessary care and supervision. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- The adult wanders outdoors alone.
- The adult uses alcohol and/or other drugs to the extent that control of their life OR safety will be imminently and potentially irreparably harmed.
- The adult engages in dangerous activities, such as leaving with a stranger, allowing an unknown person in their home, or lighting the stove or smoking while using oxygen.
- The adult is unable to identify and respond in ways that maintain their life or health in situations where they may be imminently harmed.

6. THE ADULT IS DEPENDENT ON A SERVICE OR SUPPORT THAT DOES NOT MEET THEIR NEEDS FOR NECESSARY CARE OR SUPERVISION, WHICH WILL LIKELY RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY, HARM, OR LOSS OF HEALTH REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE BY A PHYSICIAN.

The adult is likely to experience imminent harm, serious injury, or loss of health as a result of the inability or unwillingness of a service or support the adult is dependent on to meet the adult's needs for necessary care and supervision. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- The adult cannot meet their own needs for care necessary to maintain their life or health, and the support does not, cannot, or will not attend to the adult's needs.
- The adult is left alone by a support for inappropriate periods of time based on the adult's ability to provide minimal care for themselves.
- A support does not provide adequate supervision for the adult. For example, support does not prevent the adult from engaging in dangerous activities such as wandering outdoors alone, leaving with a stranger, allowing an unknown person in their home, lighting the stove or smoking while using oxygen, or being exposed to other serious hazards.
- The support fails to protect the adult from serious or threatened physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse by other family members, other household members, or others having regular access to the adult; or the support does not provide supervision necessary to protect the adult from potentially serious harm by others considering the adult's lack of protective ability.

7. THE ADULT IS EXPERIENCING ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS THAT WILL LIKELY RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY, HARM, OR LOSS OF HEALTH REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE BY A PHYSICIAN.

The adult is likely to experience imminent harm, serious injury, or loss of health as a result of exposure to environmental hazards. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- The adult is without clothing and/or shelter that is appropriate for the weather conditions to the extent that illness or injury is likely.
- A hazardous living situation or physical environment jeopardizes the minimum health and safety of the adult. Examples include:
 - » Nonexistent or inoperable heating source that leaves the adult at risk for hypothermia, and no other safe provisions have been made;
 - » No electric fans or other cooling system that meets the adult's minimum health and safety needs;
 - » Lack of electricity that makes it impossible to operate oxygen equipment, other assistive devices, or heating/cooling systems;
 - » Damage to the home that poses an imminent threat to safety or health (e.g., broken or missing windows or doors; structural damage, such as a collapsed roof or flooring; exposed electrical wires that pose a risk of fire or electrocution), and the adult is unable to address this or remove self from the home;
 - » Environmental conditions that threaten health and/or safety (e.g., presence of dangerous objects or substances; flooding; inability to safely dispose of human or animal waste; excessive garbage, spoiled food, or vermin/insect infestation that affects the adult's health), and the adult is unable to remove themselves from the environment; and
 - » Animals in the home that are known or suspected to affect the adult's health or safety, such as diseased animals or animals known to have violent tendencies and/or a history of injuring the adult.

8. THE ADULT'S RESOURCES ARE BEING MISMANAGED OR MISAPPROPRIATED, AND THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR PROTECTING ASSETS FROM FRAUD OR THEFT.

There is concern that, without prompt intervention, the adult's assets will be taken or misappropriated to the extent that they will not have the means to meet their needs.

Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- The adult's assets, property, and/or financial resources have been taken (e.g., assets are being rapidly depleted through theft, fraud, scam, or undue influence; or recent withdrawals from financial accounts) and the adult is at risk of substantial and imminent loss of assets.
- The adult's income (retirement, social security, disability, etc.) or assets are being inappropriately used, denying them provisions to imminently meet basic health and safety needs (e.g., rent, food, repairs to dangerous conditions, utilities, medications, or pay for necessary care or services).

9. OTHER IMMINENT DANGER FACTOR. DESCRIBE:

This includes any condition that poses a current threat of serious harm not covered in items 1–8.

NONE OF THE FACTORS APPLY. THE ADULT IS NOT IN IMMINENT DANGER. CONTINUE TO SECTION 3.

No imminent danger factors covered in items 1 through 9 are present. Continue to Section 3, Safety Decision.

SECTION 2. RECOMMENDED IMMEDIATE SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

Safety interventions are actions recommended specifically to mitigate any identified imminent danger factors. They should address current considerations for safety rather than long-term changes. Safety interventions should be implemented in accordance with state and local policies and procedures and within 72 hours of the first face-to-face visit with the adult. If an intervention cannot be implemented within 72 hours, consider including it on a service plan instead. Select all interventions recommended by the worker to mitigate identified imminent danger factors; then indicate whether the interventions were implemented.

1. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Food, shelter, clothing, transportation, social services, or financial assistance provided on an emergency basis. Includes counseling or supervision.

2. EMERGENCY HOLD

A 72-hour hold by law enforcement, physician, or public health.

3. HEALTH AND WELFARE CHECK

Requested by APS and performed by law enforcement.

4. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Coordination with law enforcement is needed for the adult's safety.

5. MEDICAL SERVICES

Services to attain or maintain physical health.

6. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Services to attain or maintain mental health.

7. RESTRAINING ORDER FOR REMOVAL OF PERSON ALLEGED RESPONSIBLE

Order for protection, harassment order, or restraining order for the protection of the adult or the adult's finances.

8. SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMINATION AND TREATMENT

Medical forensic services to diagnose, treat, and preserve evidence of assault.

9. SOUGHT LEGAL AUTHORITY TO REMOVE THE ADULT

Court order for Protective Arrangement, 72-hour hold, or emergency hold order.

10. SUPPORT SYSTEM ENGAGED

Family, responsible party, and/or informal supports have been identified, located, and engaged to support, meet, and/or monitor needs or otherwise provide safety to help prevent maltreatment.

11. TRANSACTION HOLD

The delay, stop, or hold of a financial transaction by a bank, credit union, broker-dealer, or investment advisor under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 45A to stop or prevent financial exploitation.

12. UNIQUE SERVICE. DESCRIBE:

Another immediate safety intervention will be applied. Describe the intervention.

SECTION 3. SAFETY DECISION

The safety decision is determined based on whether imminent danger factors were identified and whether the implemented interventions can mitigate them. There are three possible safety decisions.

SAFE. NO IMMINENT DANGER FACTORS WERE IDENTIFIED AT THIS TIME.

Based on currently available information, the adult is not likely to be in danger of serious harm from maltreatment.

CONDITIONALLY SAFE. INTERVENTIONS WERE SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE SAFETY.

One or more imminent danger factors are present. Safety interventions have been recommended, and necessary interventions to mitigate danger of serious harm from maltreatment have been implemented.

UNSAFE. INSUFFICIENT INTERVENTIONS TO ENSURE SAFETY.

One or more imminent danger factors are present. Safety interventions have been recommended or implemented but are unable to successfully mitigate the imminent danger factors. This adult will likely be in imminent danger of serious harm from maltreatment.

SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Minnesota Adult Protection Services

The purpose of the Structured Decision Making® (SDM) safety assessment is to:

1. Help assess whether the adult is likely to be in imminent danger of serious harm from maltreatment based on currently available information;
2. Determine what interventions should be initiated or maintained to provide appropriate protection; and
3. Identify the adult's values and what is important to the adult regarding their general safety and imminent danger factors identified in the assessed domains. Ideals for safety can vary by culture, community, and personal choice. This assessment engages the adult in identifying their values and perspective on their own safety using imminent danger factors in assessed domains.

Safety versus risk assessment: It is important to keep in mind the difference between safety and risk when completing this form. Safety assessment differs from risk assessment in that it assesses the adult's imminent danger and the interventions immediately needed to protect the adult. In contrast, risk assessment looks at the likelihood of future system involvement.

Underlying needs contributing to maltreatment are assessed through the strengths and needs assessment. Interventions for assessed needs are addressed in the service plan.

WHICH REFERRALS

All adults who are the subject of a MAARC report, opened in an assessment workgroup for EPS or LIA, or for APS when another agency is LIA. Exclude cases where a finding of "No determination—not a vulnerable adult" is made at the first face-to-face contact or a finding of "No determination—investigation not possible" when adult is deceased or is unable to be located following diligent efforts.

WHO

The assigned APS worker completes the safety assessment.

APS supervisor review of the completed assessment is encouraged. Supervisor review may include:

- Timeliness of the assessment based on the priority level established using the SDM® intake tool;

- Engagement with the adult, support system, and other appropriate collaterals;
- Identifying that the assessed imminent danger factors and safety interventions were thoroughly documented; and
- Evaluating service interventions recommended and implemented to address danger to the adult.

WHEN

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The SDM Intake Assessment Response Priority Level can be used to establish when the first face to face visit to complete the Safety Assessment is made; 24 or 72 hours after initial disposition. A temporary location can offer a safe and accessible environment for APS to initiate assessment and begin engagement with the adult. If the adult is located in a hospital, or other temporary location, complete the Safety Assessment at the time of the first face to face visit. A new Safety Assessment can be completed if there is a significant change in the adult's circumstances following discharge from the temporary environment.

The safety assessment process is completed, and interventions to address imminent danger factors are initiated based on the circumstances present upon first face-to-face contact with the adult. The tool should be completed by the APS worker in SSIS, based on the circumstances the worker observed upon the first face-to-face visit.

DECISION

The safety assessment provides structured information concerning the imminent threat of injury or death to an adult. This information guides the decision about whether the adult is **safe** in their current environment, **conditionally safe** with interventions in place, or **unsafe** because the interventions needed to address imminent danger factors are unable to be implemented.

The plan for safety is documented in Section 2 on the safety assessment, under "Interventions Offered/Implemented." Additional information on the safety plan may be entered in the Comments box.

Imminent danger factors are often present as a result of an adult's underlying needs not being met. In this context, the imminent danger factors assessed and interventions documented in the SDM safety assessment provide a framework for the worker to view the adult's needs. The SDM strengths and needs assessment will reflect the adult's underlying needs, and the service plan is used to address those needs to stop, reduce risk, and prevent maltreatment reoccurrence.

SDM SAFETY ASSESSMENT COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS

Minnesota Adult Protection Services

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is available to local agencies for policy guidance, consultation, and support in implementing standard tools required under the Vulnerable Adult Act, Minnesota Statutes Section 626.557.

Consistent use of the safety assessment ensures that the critical factors affecting an adult's current safety are assessed during the initial contact. It is important to become familiar with the items on the safety assessment and the accompanying definitions. Once familiar with the assessment items, conduct initial contacts with the adult and relevant supports using good social work practices (e.g., engagement skills, interviewing techniques, strength-based approaches) to collect information about the adult's situation and the circumstances related to the alleged maltreatment. Make reasonable efforts to elicit information pertinent to the assessment of all imminent danger factors and the adult's values and goals about what is important to the adult regarding their safety and interventions.

The safety assessment consists of three sections.

SECTION 1. IMMINENT DANGER FACTORS

This is a list of critical factors that must be assessed in every investigation. These factors describe conditions that, if present, place the adult in imminent danger of serious harm.

Based on reasonable efforts to obtain information necessary to assess each item, review each of the eight imminent danger factors. Select any that are present.

If circumstances pose imminent danger to the adult and these circumstances are not described by an existing item, select item 9 (other imminent danger factor). A brief description must be provided.

Use the item definitions for consistency and reliability in assessment completion.

SECTION 2. IMMEDIATE SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

The possible interventions in this list may be recommended to the adult to address imminent danger factors. Select all relevant interventions. For each recommended intervention, indicate whether the intervention was able to be implemented. Then, indicate whether implemented interventions are sufficient or insufficient to ensure the adult's safety.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

When recommending interventions, begin with those that are least restrictive for the adult while remaining effective in containing the imminent threats to the adult's safety. It is important to work assertively with the adult to address resistance and barriers to interventions to immediate safety, while being mindful of their right to self-determination.

SECTION 3. SAFETY DECISION

The safety decision is determined based on whether imminent danger factors were identified and whether the recommended interventions were able to be implemented.

SAFE. NO IMMINENT DANGER FACTORS WERE IDENTIFIED AT THIS TIME.

Based on currently available information, the adult is not likely to be in imminent danger of serious harm from maltreatment.

CONDITIONALLY SAFE. INTERVENTIONS WERE SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE SAFETY.

One or more imminent danger factors are present. Safety interventions have been recommended, and necessary services to mitigate danger of serious harm from maltreatment have been implemented.

UNSAFE. INSUFFICIENT SERVICES TO ENSURE SAFETY.

One or more imminent danger factors are present. Safety interventions have been recommended or implemented but are unable to successfully mitigate the imminent danger factors. This adult will likely be in imminent danger of serious harm from maltreatment.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

APS should make diligent efforts to engage in safety planning with the adult, support them in understanding the imminent danger factors that are present, and work with any resistance by the adult. The APS worker should ensure the adult has the ability to understand the options that may mitigate danger and understand the consequences of a refusal to make change or accept services.

If, after diligent efforts, the adult refuses to accept necessary interventions to ensure the adult's safety, workers should inform their supervisors. It is still important that the adult be notified of the services they may receive and how APS can be of assistance. The adult's refusal to engage should be documented in the case narrative. Workers should also document the efforts they made to encourage the adult to engage with safety interventions.

If interventions are refused and the situation warrants emergency services, consider emergency interventions, such as calling law enforcement, 911, or emergency behavioral health services.

If the adult is unsafe and formal services are not available to mitigate a safety threat, think of possible informal services to get the adult what they need. For instance, if the adult is experiencing self-neglect due to not taking medication regularly or consistently and is having a medical emergency, are there informal supports (family, friends, neighbors, community members) in the adult's network who may be able to check in on them daily for a medication reminder and/or to ensure the adult is taking medication that can be implemented after the adult receives needed medical attention?