

# BRIEF HOME-PROPERTY-NEIGHBORHOOD OBSERVATION TOOLS

**Objective:**

To identify physical health and safety risks that exist in a family's home, including the interior and exterior of the home, the property and the neighborhood

**Intended Use:**

- These three tools can be used to conduct a quick assessment of the interior and exterior of a home to identify issues that negatively impact the health and safety of the family.
- They also can be used to establish a plan to address the identified risks.

**Audience:**

- Leadership: To track trends and identify partners to assist in remediation of problems
- Managers: To help workers develop a broader understanding of the environmental risks that might endanger families
- Family workers: To observe and record health and safety risks to families

**Outcomes:**

- Improve ability of workers to help families address risk factors in their immediate environment
- Provide cross-family data to identify partners to address issues through action and public policy

**Context:**

Family workers are generally trained to assess the individual's or family's strengths and risks but may ignore the health and safety risks in the home, the property or the neighborhood. These risks may put the family in jeopardy and, if left unaddressed, act as a barrier to the family's well-being.

Workers can be more helpful to families when they see and understand the factors in the home and neighborhood that can cause risks or provide supports.

A family worker going to and from a home visit can observe conditions in the neighborhood and the home which may affect the family. Some problems can be addressed by the worker, such as home cleanliness or even minor repairs. Other conditions, however, may be beyond the worker's responsibilities and should be addressed by the relevant municipal organization.

### Tips

- Look for obvious risks, such as exposed wiring or no heat in the winter
- Look for less obvious signs, such as junk in the yard that may be unsightly or even dangerous
- Ask the family and other neighborhood residents about their view of what you see

### The Process

These three tools are used to record conditions in the home and neighborhood. Observations should be made while traveling to and from the home, observing the outside of the home and property as well as inside the home. After the visit, the worker should record what was seen, assessing the strengths in the environment that can be used to support the family, and the risks that need attention. This information can be used by leadership or the governance group to determine which partner organizations could assist in resolving the issues.

# OBSERVATIONAL TOOLS

## SIMPLE IN-HOME OBSERVATION TOOL

1. Is housing adequate? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Is clothing and hygiene adequate? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are the children adequately supervised? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Does the parent look tired, sleepy, coherent, attentive? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Does person being interviewed display appropriate affect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do others in household display appropriate affect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Does family converse easily with the child(ren)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do parents show affection and positive interaction? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What other parenting behaviors were observed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is there evidence of reading material in the home? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. Are the indoor and outdoor play environments safe? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Are appropriate toys available for the children? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Is the home sanitary? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Is there any evidence of drug or alcohol use? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note the conditions, and if you have any concerns about safety, cleanliness, health issues or other concerns, bring it up to your supervisor for discussion and action.



**SIMPLE HOME/PROPERTY OBSERVATION TOOL**

1. Dwelling—does it look clean and safe, or are there obvious things needing repair or are even dangerous? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Trash/Debris—does it look pretty clean of debris around the dwelling, or is it quite a mess or even unsanitary? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Vehicles—are vehicles operable and safely parked, or are there cars inoperable or parked illegally or dangerous? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Landscape/Fences—do the grounds around the dwelling look okay, or are there broken fences, dead landscaping, open standing water or sewage? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Detached Structures—if there are structures, are they solid and safe, or do they look run down, unlocked and open to the public, or hazardous? \_\_\_\_\_

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## SIMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD OBSERVATION TOOL

1. Is the neighborhood clean of debris such as broken glass, litter or animal droppings?

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2. Is there adequate lighting? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Are there people engaging other people in friendly conversation? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Are there groups of people who appear suspicious or who are aggressive? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Are there many empty lots or vacant buildings? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Is there public drinking visible? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Is automobile traffic safe? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Are there sidewalks and other pedestrian friendly locations? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Is there public transportation accessible to residents? \_\_\_\_\_

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Note the conditions, and if you have any concerns about safety, cleanliness, health issues or other concerns, bring it up to your supervisor for discussion and action.

