

Individual Assessment for Railway Children

Setting the Context and Obtaining Consent: What to say to the child before the interview

“There is a national agency called National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. This agency looks at needs and issues of all children. They are specifically concerned about child rights issues. Recently, they have taken steps to address the issue of children who come into contact with the railways. The intention is to develop a policy that will make any experience that you have with the railways safe and enabling. For this, they set up a committee which recommended that your opinion and experiences are critical to understanding your life. What you feel about amenities, safety, difficulties will help a lot in framing a good policy. I have been given the task of talking to you and seeking your help in this work. Your consent in talking to me is purely voluntary. If you are uncomfortable, you are free to withdraw from this conversation any time you wish.”

Section 1: Basic Information

Child’s Name:

Age:

Gender:

Location (Name of Railway Station/Platform No./Yard):

Date of Assessment:

Assessment done by (Name of Individual & Agency):

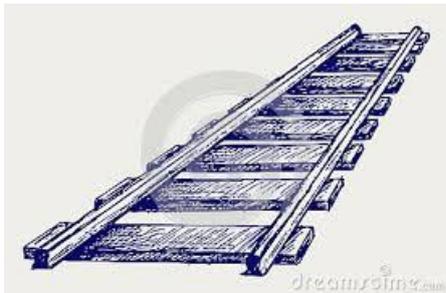
Section 2: Immediate/ Emergency Concerns (Observation & Consultation)

Assessment Domains	Yes/ No	Detailed Information/ Remarks
A. General Appearance		
Does the child have sufficient clothing on?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the child appear frightened and/or withdrawn/ agitated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the child appear to be crying and/or unhappy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Is the child's behavior angry or aggressive?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the child have/report any physical injuries?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the child have/report any other health concerns?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the child appear sick?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Any emergency health concerns (requiring immediate attention)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
In case of injury/ illness, where (what places/ people) does the child go to for help?		
Is the child visibly malnourished? (excessively thin, odema, skin lesions, discolored/ brownish hue of hair)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Section 3: Journeys, Family and Social Networks

A. Journeys



Show the child the pictures (above) and explain:

“You know how a train traveling from one place to another passes through many places, making stops along the way, with people getting on and off...various events happening at different stations, to different people”.

Ask the child to draw and recount his/her journey to the present railway station, thinking of important places, people and events that had occurred on the way. The child can thus be encouraged to represent other journeys and railways stations, including difficulties faced and strategies used to overcome them to finally get here. Ask the child to focus specifically on:

- Critical events during or before the journey.
- Helpful experiences and people.

Following descriptions of the past and the journey, move to talking about the child's current situation and needs as per the guidelines below (*"Now that you are here, tell me about your life here..."*)

- The child's current situation:
 - Current Living Arrangements:-
 - Where does the child sleep at night? (List all the places that the child sleeps in, also stating which places are frequented more often).
 - According to the child, is his/ her sleeping space safe? Why/why not?
 - Where does the child keep his/her personal belongings?
 - Does the child have access to non-food items such as mattress/ blankets? What does she have/lack?
 - How many persons (children) share the space and who are they?
 - Is there adult supervision in the living space? If yes, who are they?
 - If the child does not access a street child shelter, what are the reasons for this?
 - Hygiene and Sanitation:-
 - What space/ place does the child use for activities such as washing/bathing/toilet?
 - In the child's perception, are these places/ spaces, safe? Why/ why not?
 - Do they have access to adequate supplies for water for drinking/washing?
 - For girl children, ask how they manage menstruation.
 - Food Security:-
 - How many times a day is the child able to eat yesterday?
 - What types of foods did the child have access to yesterday?
 - Ask the child to list other types of food that the child has access to in general on other days and on an average how many times per day he/she is able to eat.
 - List the sources of food i.e. where does the child access food? What are the means by which food is accessed? (charity/ exchange for money/labour...)
 - In case of difficulties in accessing food/ food scarcity, what coping mechanisms does the child use to obtain food?
 - Education:-
 - Is the child attending school ?
 - Last grade/class attended current grade/class
 - If not attending school, reasons for child not attending school? (including child refusing to go to school).

B. Family & Social Networks

Use the picture of the world (see below), telling the child that this is his/her world and that you would like to know a little about it.

Ask the child to:

- Write in the names of all the people in his/her world. (Alternately the child can choose to draw some of these people).
- Include people who are important:
 - Include him/herself;
 - Persons whom child feels close to/ loves;
 - Persons who are important to the child's daily existence/ survival
 - Persons whom the child meets everyday
 - Those who have hurt or upset the child
 - People the child lives with currently
 - People the child lived with at home/ in the past
 - Persons who are helpful to the child/ the child trusts
- Ask the child to describe each of these different people and the nature of his/her relationship with them.



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Section 4: Problems and Coping Strategies

A. Problems and Coping Strategies

Explain the following to the child: *“Everyone has difficulties of various types. Living in the railway station, as you do, must also be difficult and worrisome sometimes. For example, children such as yourself might have problems like getting enough food to eat, unfamiliar places, people who are dangerous or hurtful, thoughts about comfort and safety. Let us think of these problems or worries as monsters...big monsters, small ones, more scary ones, less scary ones...Can you draw the monsters that you face?”*

When the child has drawn all his/her monsters, ask him/her to mark the biggest/ most scary/ most worrisome ones.

Ask the child which the top 3 monsters are.

Ask the child: *How do you feel when you think about/ are faced with these big monsters? (feelings/ emotions?)*

Ask the child what he/she does to cope with them? (List all the strategies the child uses, including places/ people/ services where the child may seek help).

Note: If the child mentions physical/ sexual abuse in this section, note it and probe for details in this section if the child is willing to share information.

B. Physical and Sexual Abuse

Explain the idea of trust to the child: *“Everybody deserves to feel safe and protected. Trusting a person means knowing or believing that this person will not hurt you in any way or do anything that makes you feel confused or uncomfortable. Children who have been hurt by someone have had their trust broken. It can be hard to trust others again when you have been hurt or been unsafe and unprotected”*.

Now, ask the child to i) draw a picture of a person (or people) he/she can trust; ii) draw a picture of a person (or people) he/she cannot trust.

Ask the child to explain:

- The person he/she trusts—what are some of the things that this person does (or does not do) that makes him/her feel he/she is trustworthy?
- The person he/she do not trust-- what are some of the things that this person does (or does not do) that makes you feel he/she is NOT trustworthy? (for example, making you feel sad/angry/humiliated...or actions on his/her part that are physically hurtful (injured you) or uncomfortable). What did the child do in response? To whom and where did he/she go for help/ support?

C. Substance Abuse

1. Are there circumstances/difficulties in the railway station that push children like you to use substances (substances such as tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, solvents...)?

2. Have you ever been forced to sell drugs?

3. Are drugs used to get something else in exchange? If so, what?

4. Have the use of drugs ever put you in a vulnerable situation (where, for instance, you were unable to exercise judgment to protect yourself from abuse?)

Section 5: Feelings and Emotions

A. Depression and Self-Harm Risks

Explain to the child: *“There are times when all of us feel sad or bad about ourselves. Do you feel this way sometimes? (Child is likely to say ‘yes’). Do you know how fever is measured? (The child is likely to say ‘thermometer’—if not, explain what a thermometer is...a device to measure temperature). Like you have a thermometer to measure temperature or how much fever you have, here is a ‘feelings’ thermometer (show the child the picture below). This is to measure how sad/ bad you feel. ‘0’ or ‘1’ means you do not feel very sad...and ‘10’ means that you feel really very sad/bad”.*

i) Look at the ‘feelings’ thermometer and tell me, for most of the time, how sad/bad do you feel? (Mark it).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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ii) At which times do you feel really very sad? Describe when/ in what situations.

iii) What do you do or think you want to do when you feel very sad? (something to feel better? Nothing...?)

B. Anger

Explain to the child: *“Just like all of us feel sad at times, we also feel angry or aggressive towards others...and when we feel angry, we might shout or feel like hitting someone or actually hit the person who made us angry. Now, let us use the same ‘feelings’ thermometer to measure how angry you feel sometimes”.*

i) Look at the ‘feelings’ thermometer and tell me, for most of the time, how angry (or irritable) do you feel? (Mark it).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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ii) At which times do you feel really very angry? Describe when/ in what situations/ what do people do to make you angry.

iii) What do you do when you feel very angry?

iv) Is there a specific event or person that made you very angry and which you have not been able to remove from your mind? (i.e. thinking about it continues to make you angry)

Section 6: Psychosocial Observations/ Issues

Record your observations and the child’s responses to make draw conclusions about the child’s feelings, perceptions and experience of the problem.

Questions/ Tasks	Child’s Responses	Observation/ Assessment
<p>A. Peer Relations/ Sociability 1. Ask the child to pick the statement that best describes him/herself: <i>i) Most of the time, I like being with friends and it is important for me to be with others.</i> <i>ii) I usually like being by myself.</i></p>		

<p>iii) I can manage by myself but once in a while it is useful to have others/ friends.</p> <p>2. When I see another child in trouble, I:</p> <p>i) Always try my best to help him/her, even if it inconveniences me.</p> <p>ii) I might be helpful as long as it is not bothersome to me.</p> <p>iii) I prefer to stay away and mind my own business.</p>		
<p>B. Child's insight/ perception of the problem: Under what circumstances would you consider returning home? (If the child explains why or why not he/she would return home in a manner that refers to a reasonable account of the reality of the child's life, then you may conclude that he/she is insightful. Also based your conclusion on the child's responses during the activity on Monsters/ Problems.</p>		
<p>C. 3 wish test Ask the child: <i>If a genie were to appear and grant you 3 wishes...saying you could have anything you wanted...what would you wish for?</i></p>		
<p>D. Does the child have time-place orientation? (Comment based on child's responses to previous questions i.e. if the child has the ability to answer them, then he/she has time-place orientation)</p>		
<p>E. Are the child's cognitive/thought processes adequate? (Comment based on child's responses to previous questions...fragmented/disconnected/coherent/predominant content—any preoccupation with particular themes/ logical)</p>		
<p>F. Comfort level, cooperativeness, rapport, social responsiveness (Does child answer general questions you ask? Sociable/ friendly/ excessively shy/ refuses to answer/angry/defiant and does not want to talk/ difficult to establish rapport)</p>	(Based on above responses)	
<p>G. Activity level and Behaviour (quiet/normal, over-active/hyperactive, constantly moving around/ extremely slow/inactive/dull/drowsy/ inhibited/ communicative/ agitated/aroused)</p>	(Based on above responses)	
<p>H. Attention and concentration (pays attention to what you ask and answers appropriately/ distracted)</p>	(Based on above responses)	
<p>I. Speech and language skills (any speech defects/ stammer/stutter/slurring/ poor vocabulary/ few words/ adequate language and communication/ able to speak/ makes conversation/ hearing disability)</p>	(Based on above responses)	
<p>J. Any other important observation/ impression:</p>		

K. Situational Categories

Based on above information, categorize the child according to the groups below (you may mark more than one category as applicable to the child's situation):

New Arrival on the Platform (1 day to 4 weeks):	
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First time run away	
Living and working on the platform	
Living in dwellings around the railway station with family	
Living in dwellings around the railway station without family (alone or with peers)	

Section 7: Summary and Action Plan

A. Summary

Based on the above assessment, summarize the main problems and concerns of the child, including protection and psychosocial issues. Mention key survival challenges and coping strategies. Highlight areas for immediate assistance/ response. **Include the child's version of the problem(s) and ways to cope/ his or her suggestions.**

B. Action Plan

List actions taken or planned by the assessment agency/ case worker to assist the child, such as emergency actions/ measures to address immediate concerns, referrals made to other agencies.

