

# **MFEI Level of Care Tool**

## **Module 10 – Environmental Assessment**



# Module 10: Environmental Assessment

Covered in this module:

- Home Environment
  - Disrepair of the home
  - Squalid conditions
  - Inadequate heating and cooling
  - Lack of personal safety
  - Limited access to home or rooms within the home



# 24. Home Environment: Intent

- These items are important as the home and its surroundings can greatly impact a person's health and overall well-being
- The intent of this item is to **determine whether the home environment is hazardous or uninhabitable**, and includes assessment of:
  - a. Disrepair of the home
  - b. Squalid conditions
  - c. Inadequate heating and cooling
  - d. Lack of personal safety
  - e. Limited access to home or rooms within the home

# 24. Home Environment: Process

- Emphasis is on observation for this item, but there may be areas that you are not able to see
- Ask the person or family member for permission to walk through the home or request a tour of the home; it is best to do this while discussing the person's perception as to the adequacy and safety of the home environment
- Look for evidence of the problem areas noted in this section
- If the person is temporarily in an institution, base assessment on the home environment by asking about it

# 24. Home Environment: Process

- Assure the person that you are interested in assessing the safety of the home, not their personal habits
- If you cannot obtain information to code, choose “unknown”
- Talk to the person or family member about any areas that you cannot assess yourself through visual inspection
- If you have concerns that the home environment is compromising the person’s health and safety, use professional judgment to determine if referral or report is necessary

## 24. Home Environment: Coding

Code for any of the following that make the home hazardous or uninhabitable. If the person is temporarily in an institution, base your assessment on your last home visit. If you have never visited and do not have a reliable source of information, use code “unknown.”

- No**
- Yes**
- Unknown**

## a. Disrepair of the Home

**Intent:** To observe whether the home may be unsafe to live in and cause the individual to have difficulty maintaining their health and safety

**Definition:** Hazardous clutter; inadequate or no lighting in living room, sleeping rooms, or other spaces; holes in the floor; leaking pipes; broken appliances; disrepair inside of home; may include hoarding if it contributes to disrepair of the home

# a. Disrepair of the Home: Process

- Ask about living in the home, specifically about electricity, lighting, appliances, and anything in disrepair in the home
- **Observe:**
  - Are there holes in the floor?
  - Is there so much clutter that the person is at risk of falling?
  - Are there lightbulbs and light in each room?
  - Are the stove, fridge, furnace, or other appliances broken?



## **a. Disrepair of the Home: Example Questions**

- Do you have lights in every room?
- Do you have any problems at night with lights or electrical?
- Are you able to get around your home okay or do personal items get in your way?
- Do your refrigerator, oven, microwave, and other appliances work?
- Do you have running water?
- Have you had any issues with your electricity not working in one area of your home?

# a. Disrepair of the Home: Coding Examples

Disrepair of Home	
<b>Yes</b>	<p>Mr. A's home had clutter all over the floor. He tripped over the clutter once getting a drink of water during the assessment.</p> <p>Or, Mr. A has not been cooking because his stove does not work.</p>
<b>No</b>	<p>The home does not appear to be in disrepair. Mr. A reports that all of the electricity and plumbing work fine.</p>
<b>Unknown</b>	<p>The assessment was not conducted in Mr. A's home and Mr. A did not provide information about his home when asked.</p>

## b. Squalid Conditions

**Intent:** To observe whether the home may be unsafe to live in and cause the individual to have difficulty maintaining their health and safety

**Definition:** Extremely dirty, infestation by vermin or bugs. There may be rodent droppings or dried food on the floor. The condition must be much more deteriorated than “usual” clutter and household dirt or dust. May include hoarding if it is leading to squalid conditions.

## b. Squalid Conditions: Process

- For this item, it is best to use personal observation
- Think about whether what you are seeing seems dirtier than the person just forgetting to dust for a few days or having a sink/counter full of dirty dishes
- Remember that the living situation does not need to meet your level of cleanliness, you need to assess for whether the conditions are so dirty as to be unsafe
- **Observe:**
  - Is the house extremely dirty?
  - Do you see rodent droppings or insects?
  - Do you see signs of hoarding?

## b. Squalid Conditions: Coding Examples

Squalid Conditions	
<b>Yes</b>	Mr. A's home has visible insects and rodent droppings on the floor. There is also evidence of hoarding as he has stacks of newspapers all over the floor and on all of the chairs.
<b>No</b>	The home does not appear to be in squalid condition. Mr. A reports that he cleans the house weekly and although there are currently a lot of dirty dishes in the sink, his daughter will be coming over soon to help out with this.
<b>Unknown</b>	The assessment was not conducted in Mr. A's home and Mr. A did not provide information about his home when asked.

## c. Inadequate Heating or Cooling

**Intent:** To determine whether the person is able to maintain a comfortable temperature in their home across all seasons

**Definition:** Too hot in summer or too cold in winter, or inappropriately cold in summer or hot in winter and not in the person's (or caregiver's) control

# c. Inadequate Heating or Cooling: Process

- **Observe:**
  - Is the home uncomfortably hot or cold?
  - Does the person appear to be using substitute heating or cooling methods, such as an oven or space heaters instead of a furnace?
- **Example Questions:**
  - Does your heating/cooling not work in a specific part of your home?
  - Do you have difficulty paying your heat/AC bill?
  - Do you have fans/personal heaters?

## c. Inadequate Heating or Cooling: Coding Examples

Inadequate Heating and Cooling	
<b>Yes</b>	Mr. A's home feels like 80 degrees inside when it's 90 degrees outside. When you ask about the warmth, he shares that the AC unit overheats if he runs it too much.
<b>No</b>	Mr. A's home feels comfortable and Mr. A reports no issues with heating/cooling all year round.



## d. Lack of Personal Safety

**Intent:** To determine if the person feels safe outside their home and in their surrounding neighborhood

**Definition:** Person has a regular fear (regardless of cause) about safety while visiting places in their community. The person is or feels potentially unsafe within or immediately outside of their home. For example, fear of violence, safety problem going to the mailbox or visiting neighbors, heavy traffic in the street. This can include real or perceived risk of someone breaking into the home or being attacked when leaving or returning home.

## d. Lack of Personal Safety: Process

- Speak to both the person and their team about the person's safety. It will also be important to note what the person may observe while walking around their neighborhood including violence, drug use, and other risky behaviors. Even if the individual has no reason in your opinion to be afraid, but states that they are fearful then mark this question yes. Conversely, do not assume that the person feels unsafe based on your impression of the neighborhood.
- **Example Questions:**
  - Do you worry when getting your mail?
  - Do you have any concerns about your neighborhood?
  - Are you able to cross the street safely?

## d. Lack of Personal Safety: Coding Examples

Lack of Personal Safety, fear of violence,  
issues in neighborhood, busy street

**Yes**

Mr. A states that he is afraid to even go downstairs to get his mail due to hearing people shouting and drug use happening right outside the front door to the building.

**No**

Mr. A reports that he feels comfortable walking around his neighborhood, and even knows most of his neighbors on a first name basis.

**Unknown**

The assessment was not conducted in Mr. A's home and Mr. A did not provide information about his neighborhood when asked.

## e. Limited Access to Home or Rooms in Home

**Intent:** To determine if person has access to home from curb as well as access to all rooms within the home

**Definition:** There are physical problems with the building that limit access. For example, difficulty entering or leaving the home; unable to climb stairs, no railings although needed, unstable stairs. The person may also live in a multi-story building in which the elevator is often broken. This item includes physical problems with the building that limit access. Due to wheelchair or mobility issues, the individual is not able to access rooms in their home or able to exit or enter the home safely and independently.

## e. Limited Access to Home or Rooms in Home: Process

- Observe how easily the person is able to get around their home; ask the person about any difficulties in accessing rooms and leaving and entering the home
- **Observe:**
  - Are there handrails?
  - Is there a ramp or elevator?
  - Does the entry into the home appear safe? e.g., smooth walkways and no obstructions
  - Observe the person navigating their environment, e.g., are the doorways wide enough?
- **Example Questions:**
  - Are you able to get in and out of your own home safely?
  - Is the elevator reliable?
  - Are you able to access all of the areas you need to in your home?
  - Do you have access to cabinets, doors, and closets?

## e. Limited Access to Home or Rooms in Home: Coding Examples

### Limited Access to Home or Rooms within the Home

<b>Yes</b>	Mr. A states that he is not able to access his bathroom without help as his wheelchair won't fit in between the doorframe.
<b>No</b>	Mr. A reports that he is able to access all rooms in his home, and thanks to a ramp that was just put in he can exit and enter freely.
<b>Unknown</b>	The assessment was not conducted in Mr. A's home and Mr. A did not provide information about his home when asked.

# Practice Scenarios

# Environmental Assessment: Practice Scenario A

Mr. R has not had a working refrigerator in months, and, as a result, mainly eats cereal and other processed food. He rarely leaves his building as he has difficult ambulating and must use steps to reach the sidewalk. The steps lack a railing and due to his impaired mobility, he worries about falling.

**How would you code items 24a. *Disrepair of the home*, b. *Squalid conditions*, c. *Inadequate heating or cooling*, d. *Lack of personal safety*, and e. *Limited access to home or rooms in home* for Mr. R?**



# Environmental Assessment: Practice Scenario A - Answer

Mr. R has not had a working refrigerator in months, and, as a result, mainly eats cereal and other processed food. He rarely leaves his building as he has difficult ambulating and must use steps to reach the sidewalk. The steps lack a railing and due to his impaired mobility, he worries about falling.

24a. Disrepair of the home: **Yes**

24b. Squalid Conditions: **No**

24c. Inadequate heating or cooling: **No**

24d. Lack of personal safety: **Yes**

24e. Limited access to home or rooms in home: **Yes**

# Environmental Assessment: Practice Scenario B

Mr. O is in the hospital after having a stroke. When you visit for his assessment, he is unable to respond to questions about his home environment. No family member or caregiver is available to assist with information.

**How would you code items code items 24a. *Disrepair of the home*, b. *Squalid conditions*, c. *Inadequate heating or cooling*, d. *Lack of personal safety*, and e. *Limited access to home or rooms in home* for Mr. O?**

# Environmental Assessment: Practice Scenario B - Answer

Mr. O is in the hospital after suffering a stroke. When you visit for his assessment, he is unable to respond to questions about his home environment. **No family member or caregiver is available** to assist with information.

24a. Disrepair of the home: **unknown**

24b. Squalid Conditions: **unknown**

24c. Inadequate heating or cooling: **unknown**

24d. Lack of personal safety: **unknown**

24e. Limited access to home or rooms in home: **unknown**