

Smith Family Structured Case Note

The following document is a summary of the information that was gathered during the three interviews with the Smith family.

Case Name: Smith	Case Number: *****	Caseworker: Holder
Date of Contact: 10/17/00	Time of Contact: 10:00 am	Contact Type: Announced Home Visit
Purpose of Contact: Referral received from MGM regarding alleged lack of supervision of two children ages 10 and 4 by mother and paramour.		
Participants: Crystal Smith, mother; Colin Levitt, Paramour, Carley Smith age 10, Christian Smith, age 4		
Contact Summary: Three separate interviews were conducted back to back in the Smith home. Initial interview was held with Carley, age 10 and Christian, age 4 who confirmed the allegations (see below). Second interview was with Colin, the paramour, who confirmed the allegations, although provided somewhat conflicting information regarding his involvement (see below). The third interview was with Crystal who also confirmed that the children are left alone, but expressed her views that Carley was able to take care of herself and her brother (see below). Home appeared clean and free from physical safety hazards.		
Information Gathered for Safety Assessment		
<i>Safety Domains:</i>		
<p>1. Type of Maltreatment: What is the extent of maltreatment? <input type="checkbox"/> No new allegations of maltreatment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current Maltreatment (please describe): Following Carley's call, the maternal grandmother came to the home and found that the children were unsupervised. Apparently, the mother had left the children by themselves so that she could go out on the town. (MGM) Both of the children reported being fearful for their safety and the safety of their mother. (Carley) During the CPS interview, the mother indicated that she did not return home that evening until approximately 4:30 am. (Mother) After finding the children home alone, unsupervised, the grandmother took them to her house. (MGM)</p>		
<p>2. Nature of Maltreatment: What circumstances surround the maltreatment? <input type="checkbox"/> No new maltreatment identified <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circumstances surrounding current maltreatment (please describe): Based on the interviews with the children and the mother, it appears that the children have repeatedly been left alone by the mother. This occurs several times per week. The mother admits to having a significant substance abuse problem. She reports she uses alcohol and crack cocaine approximately 5-6 times per week. The mother's substance abuse appears to be affecting the mother's ability to adequately supervise the children as well as consistently meet their basic needs for safety. The mother does not deny that the children were left alone but minimizes the severity of the concerns. This is exemplified by mother's report that Carley is capable of providing the needed supervision. (Carley and Mother)</p>		
<p>3. Child Functioning: How does the child(ren) function, including their condition? Carley appears to be bright and is very verbal. She is sociable and pleasant to talk with. She indicates that she has many friends. She reports that she does well in school. She is in the fifth grade at Franklin Elementary. She appears developmentally appropriate and physically healthy. She accepts responsibility by taking on the caregiver role for both her mother and brother. She appears to be emotionally and intellectually mature for her age. She is somewhat preoccupied with family situation as she expresses</p>		

concern for the welfare of her mother and she is also protective of her younger brother. Carley expresses fear of being left alone and she is afraid of the neighborhood. Carley reports that she wishes they lived in a better neighborhood, then maybe she would not be so afraid to be alone with her brother. She appears somewhat parentified as observed in her interactions with her brother and this worker, taking the lead, protecting Christian, etc. (Carley)

Christian appears to be physically healthy. He is not very talkative. He is shy and somewhat withdrawn. He participates in age-appropriate activities and indicates having friends. He appears to be somewhat clingy to Carley. (Christian and Observation) He is a "sweet" child according to mother but is growing out of the stage of wanting to be in her lap. (Mother)

4. Adult Functioning: How do the adults within the household function, including substance use & behavioral health?

Crystal appears to be intelligent, articulate, and sociable. She is able to communicate her needs but has difficulty meeting those needs in adaptive ways. She has limited ability to solve problems (particularly with regards to long-term problem solving). She expresses having a positive vision for her future (e.g., to get out of the "projects."). However, her ideas and thoughts about changing her current circumstances are not planned out. Crystal has difficulty managing stress. She has feelings of insecurity and becomes easily threatened. Crystal lacks self-control (e.g., substance abuse, leaving the kids unattended). She appears to have poor self-esteem. She has a significant substance abuse problem (e.g., regularly uses alcohol and crack cocaine). There may be some dependency issues as evident in her history of failed relationships with men. Also, she appears to frequently rely on others to get her needs met (e.g., Colin, Carley, her mother). While she is somewhat open about her drug usage, she remains guarded. Crystal expressed feeling "guilty" about some of the choices that she has made in her life. At some level, she remains in denial about the significance of individual problems and tends to blame others. (Crystal and observation)

Colin is clearly able to communicate needs, feelings, and perceptions regarding the family situation, but generally keeps the conversation at a superficial level. He appears to be somewhat guarded, distrustful, and does not talk much about himself. He tends to remove himself from any direct responsibility for family problems by focusing attention toward Crystal. He is controlled and seems thoughtful. He appears to be resourceful and intelligent. Based on interviews with the children, it appears that he is distributing drugs within the community and has been responsible for supplying Crystal with drugs. He denies selling drugs but is vague about his employment. He avoids conflict (e.g., prefers to leave the home during conflict). Colin has no apparent mental health issues. Although he denies substance abuse/use, there are concerns that he might be involved with drugs. He presents as emotionally controlled and stable. (Colin, Crystal, Carley, and observations)

5. General Parenting: How do caregivers generally parent (i.e. knowledge, skills, protectiveness, history)?

Crystal speaks very fondly of the children and appears to be proud of them. She sees Carley as being very much like her when she was that age. She feels that both of her children are exceptional. When talking about Carley, she indicated that "she is going to be somebody." Based on interviews with the children, Crystal and Colin, there appear to be strong attachments between the mother and the children. She clearly has aspirations for the children to make something out of their lives and believes that they have the potential to do so. However, she has difficulty translating these feelings into positive and consistent parenting practices. Her substance abuse problem frequently results in her being unresponsive to the needs of the kids, both emotionally and physically. Her expectations of the children

are inappropriate, which often means that Carley is required to take on a great deal of responsibility for maintaining the household. Crystal readily admits that Carley "takes care of a lot of things" and she refers to Carley as "my big girl." Crystal indicated that she did feel that it was appropriate for Carley to take care of Christian by herself. Crystal's questionable parenting practices appear to be more related to the mother's substance abuse problem, rather than a lack of knowledge and/or skill. Parenting decisions are often impulsive and are influenced by her urges to satisfy the drug dependency. (Crystal and observation)

Colin speaks positively of the kids (e.g., "good kids;" "I love the kids."). He appears to enjoy spending time with them (e.g., takes them to the park and takes them to get something to eat). The relationship between the children and him seems to be more like a big brother rather than a father figure. Although on a couple of occasions he referred to Carley and Christian as "his kids." Carley indicated that she gets along with him but does not see him as a father figure. Generally, Colin seems uncertain about his role as a parent. This is partially related to the way that Crystal undermines his role or standing with the children. Also, it appears that Colin is yet to make a firm commitment to the family. He is frequently in and out of the home and subsequently that affects his degree of involvement with the kids. Beyond talking about "babysitting," it appears that Colin may not view the supervision and/or general welfare of the children as his direct responsibility. (Colin, Carley, and observation)

6. Parenting Discipline: How do caregivers discipline the children?

Crystal is primarily responsible for the discipline of the children. She rarely allows Colin to have any leverage in disciplining the children (e.g., "No conflict over the kids because he [Colin] is not their father."). The mother denies physically disciplining the children. Disciplinary approaches may be inconsistent or passive as a result of the mother's substance abuse and her frequent absences from the home. (e.g., Carley indicated that Crystal and Colin are gone almost every night.) It is possible that the conflict between the adults over roles and responsibilities regarding discipline may upset Crystal and or Colin. Colin does not take an active role in disciplining the children. He expresses some frustration about Crystal not letting him have more of a "parental" role with respect to guiding and/or redirecting the kids. (Crystal, Carley, and observation)

Changes to the Safety Assessment and/or Safety Plan

Did the information gathered during this contact result in a new In Home Safety Assessment Worksheet:
 Yes No

If yes, list the date of that assessment: xx/xx/xxxx

Did the information gathered during this contact result in a new/revised Safety Plan:
 Yes No

If yes, list the date of that Safety Plan: xx/xx/xxxx