

Additional Smith Family Information

Directions: This information has been provided to supplement the information learned through the most recent interviews with the Smith Family and provide detail about potential resources. Review the information and incorporate it into your formal In-Home Safety Assessment.

As part of the next steps with Crystal and Colin, you ask if there are any resources to their family that would be able to help to assure the safety of Carley and Christian. After some reluctance, Crystal mentions her mother, Sheila Smith. She feels that even though she “causes a lot of my problems,” she is always willing to help. She also shares that she has a brother, Brian, who lives in the next town over. She does not see Brian a lot since he is always busy at his job as an adjunct professor at the community college. He might be willing to help, if he needed to.

The Smith family is also members of the Brightside Baptist Church. The pastor, Michael Scott, has been supportive of Crystal and her children. Crystal feels that he or other members of their church may be willing to help, but Crystal only feels comfortable talking with Pastor Scott about her family. Colin is quiet throughout most of the conversation. He does not feel that his friends would be capable or interested in helping out with the kids. He also expresses that he does not feel able to handle the kids full time by himself. Colin does not have any family close by. His sister lives in a different state and has never met Crystal, Carley, or Christian. He no longer communicates with either of his parents.

You ask Crystal about service providers she previously worked with and her relationship with them. Crystal said that the Drug and Alcohol (D&A) counselor, Clint Nail, was able to help her before, but she has not spoken with him for two years. Colin does not know him at all. Crystal expresses a willingness to speak with Clint, if he still works at the same place. She does not remember any of the other provider names and did not feel as if they understood her or helped her in the past.

You are able to make some phone calls from the Smith house. All of the resources Crystal and Colin identified are willing to come over and discuss how they can help. As people arrive, Crystal becomes more quiet and nervous – even though each person greets her warmly.

You ask Crystal to share with her friends and family, in her own words, why they are here today. Crystal states that they are here because her Mother told on her. You end up needing to step in to restate the purpose of getting everyone together which is to not place blame or point fingers, but to get together as a family to assure the safety of Carley and Christian. You express that the concerns are that both children are being left alone for extended periods of time due to Crystal’s drug use. Crystal’s body language is very rigid and she becomes defensive.

Brian states that he has been so busy with work that he did not realize that there was a problem. He shares that he would be willing to help but that teaching takes up a lot of his time. He would not be able to care for the kids full time.

Pastor Scott expresses support for Crystal and her children. He feels strongly that he would be able to provide help through the church and encourages Crystal to let Carley and Christian take a more active role in the after school programs at the church. They even have a group for kids Christian's age who are not yet in school during the day. If necessary, he would be willing to call on the other members of the congregation to seek their support as well.

Sheila states that she wants to see Crystal taking care of her kids. She does not want to hear that the kids are left alone anymore. She states that she knows that Crystal is a good mother when she is not on drugs, but that lately Crystal is not doing right by her kids. She wants Crystal to stop doing drugs and leaving her kids alone. Crystal becomes very defensive with her mother at this point and tries to minimize the safety threats and her actions. She still will not acknowledge that she left the children alone for all that long and wants everyone to stop judging her. Colin expresses his opinion that Crystal is a good mother and tries her best. You acknowledge Crystal's strengths, especially her love for her children and that she has a history of being a good parent without any help in the past. You also acknowledge that there are still the concerns for the safety of both children and that we are working together without shame or blame to determine how to make sure Carley and Christian are safe.

Clint Nail speaks out at this point and reminds the group that he knows that Crystal has been successful at being drug free in the past. Crystal states that she went two full years without using drugs. Clint stresses that, in his opinion, what needs to change is Crystal's drug use. Clint states that there is an opening at his facility that Crystal could enter into today. The program requires a five-day inpatient stay for detox and then a longer-term outpatient therapy to treat the addiction.

Crystal is very reluctant at first to leave her children. The last time she went through the process it was hard for her to be away from her kids – and to see her kids doing so well without her. Every time they came to visit she felt more like a failure. Pastor Scott was able to reassure Crystal that her kids love her and she will always be their mother. Pastor Scott stated that, in the long run, if a few days away from them means that she will be able to provide for them on her own, it would be worth the separation.

Sheila says that she would be willing to care for Carley and Christian at her house – as long as she needs to – until Crystal gets back on her feet again. She states that the kids have stayed with her before, they are comfortable at her house, and they have their rooms already set up. Brian says that he will stop by when he can to help out, maybe to take Carley to school or to the after school programs. Pastor Scott shares that the kids are welcome at the church and he would be available if Sheila needed help. The group looks to Crystal and Colin for agreement. Colin is silent. Crystal appears sad, looks away, and nods.