

# Smith Family Updated Case Note and Safety Assessment

## CASE NOTE

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

Case Name: Smith	Case Number: *****	Caseworker: Holder
Date of Contact:	Time of Contact: 9:00 am	Contact Type: Unannounced Home Visit
<p>Purpose of Contact: A referral was received from law enforcement regarding a violent altercation that occurred between the parents the previous night in the presence of three children ages 11 yrs., 5 yrs. and 3 months A second referral was received this morning from jail personnel on behalf of the now incarcerated father of the infant and step-father of the two older children regarding the mother's alleged substance abuse and improper supervision of all three children.</p>		
<p>Participants: Crystal Smith, mother; Colin Levitt, step-father and father, Carley Smith age 11, Christian Smith, age 5, and Cameron Levitt, age 3 months.</p>		
<p>Contact Summary: Four separate back to back interviews were conducted with the family members. The first interview was conducted at school with Carley Smith, who confirmed the allegations (see below). The second interview was conducted at school with Christian Smith, who confirmed the allegations (see below). The third interview was conducted at jail with Colin Levitt, who confirmed the allegations, although provided somewhat conflicting information regarding his involvement (see below). The fourth interview was conducted in the home with Crystal, who presented in a hostile and uncooperative manner, possibly intoxicated and gave conflicting information regarding accounts of her involvement. The infant Cameron was observed during the home visit. The home appeared cluttered, dirty and in disarray with turned over chairs and table. Shards of glass from a broken storm door window and pieces of a broken lamp were present on the living room floor creating possible physical safety hazards. A brief interview was conducted with the school guidance counselor and an audio tape of the 911 call was heard.</p>		
<b>Information Gathered for Safety Assessment</b>		
<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 to 911, the police arrived to find the mother calm and the father irate. The mother, who presented in a calm controlled manner accused the father, while intoxicated, of assaulting her, knocking Christian over causing an injury to his lip, eye and cheek and grabbing the baby from her arms. The father, presenting in an irate manner accused the mother of using illegal substances and neglecting the children. As the children appeared to be unharmed and the mother responsible, the father was arrested and the children were left with the mother. (police report) Jail personnel called this a.m. to report that the father was alleging that the mother has relapsed and has been abusing drugs for several months and that he had come home that day to find his infant son alone with the two young children. He alleges that the argument was the result of his confronting mother with her behavior. (Colin) Both of the children confirmed a violent altercation the night before and confirmed that Christian was knocked down by his step-father and that Colin had grabbed the baby out of their mother's arms while they were fighting. Both children reported being fearful for their safety and the safety of their mother. Carley also confirmed that she watched her brothers while her mother was out and that most of the time there was no formula for the baby. She reported that she tried to feed the baby milk from the refrigerator but it was sour and the baby threw-up. (Carley and Christian) Mother accused father/stepfather of assaulting her and the children while he was drunk and refused to answer allegations regarding her conduct and refused to take a drug test. Multiple attempts by CYS worker to engage the mother such as providing non-judgmental responses, offering to involve</p>		

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supportive family members and offering services such as food and financial assistance were unsuccessful. The mother demanded CYS worker leave the home (Crystal, observation) The 911 recording supports the conclusion that the children were exposed to a very violent, frightening and traumatic event the previous night. (911 recording)

2. Nature of Maltreatment: What circumstances surround the maltreatment?

No new maltreatment identified  Circumstances surrounding current maltreatment (please describe): Based on the interviews with the children, mother and step-father/father, it appears that the children have been left alone by the mother and this behavior may be occurring several times per week. The step-father/father admits to drinking alcohol to excess the previous night. In response to discovering the children alone and that he suspects that the mother has done this on numerous occasions. He admits to striking the mother and taking the baby from her as he suspected that the mother was high on cocaine. He denies that he struck or knocked down Christian. Although he admits to drinking every night he denies it's excessive. He admits to striking the mother at least once during her pregnancy and a couple of times after the baby was born. The mother denies having a substance abuse problem and became hostile and uncooperative when asked to discuss allegations regarding her behavior. Mother smelled of alcohol during the 11:30 a.m. visit. She refused to take a drug test. The mother's alleged substance and possible alcohol 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 father's admitted alcohol use and domestic violence toward the mother and conduct towards Christian and Cameron appear to be affecting his ability to adequately protect and care for his infant son and his step-children. (Crystal, Colin, Carley and Christian)

3. Child Functioning: How does the child(ren) function, including their condition?

Carley, a sixth grade student at Franklin Elementary, appears to be intelligent, verbal, developmentally appropriate, physically healthy, but very depressed. Carley presented as very protective of her mother and was, at first, reluctant to report that her mother left her alone with her brothers. However, she did report that she watches her brother after she returns home from school several days a week. Sometimes her mother is not home when she gets home from school and the boys are alone. She reports that she has been doing this "a while" and her mother told her not to tell her step-father. Carley accepts responsibility for the caretaking role for both her brothers as she reports that since she is now 11-years-old her mother told her that she should no longer be scared of being left alone and that she is old enough now to watch her brothers. Carley reports that she called the police last night because Colin was drinking, yelling at and hitting her mother. She reports that Colin knocked Christian over when he grabbed the baby out of her mother's arms. Carley reported that she cried and was afraid because Colin hurt Christian and might hurt the baby. Carley refused to say whether she has seen her mother take any drugs. However, her eyes began to tear up when asked this question. Carley did report that her mother got very angry at her for calling the police and that she took the phone from Carley and threw it across the room. Carley reported that when the police arrived she told the police that she felt safe with her mother and that her mother did not take drugs as Colin was saying. Carley is extremely preoccupied with the family situation and says she is afraid of Colin and for her mother's and her brother's safety. (Carley)

Christian, who attends kindergarten at Franklin Elementary School, appears to be physically healthy although somewhat small for his age. His vocabulary appears limited for his age. He is shy and somewhat withdrawn. Christian reports that Carley takes care of him a lot and that sometimes his mother is not there. He reports that when his mother came home last night that she bumped into a chair "like she was going to fall" and that Colin yelled at his mother last night and hit her. Christian reported that Colin bumped into him hard and it hurt and that Colin grabbed the baby from his mother. He reported crying and that Carley hugged him and took

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care of him. Christian reported that his mom grabbed the phone from Carley and yelled at her and then threw the phone across the room. He remembers that the police came to the house last night and that they took Colin away. Christian reported that he was afraid of Colin last night. He reports that he is not usually scared because Carley takes care of him and she is nice to him. He reports that Colin is usually nice but was not nice last night. Christian cried at the end of the interview. (Christian)

School guidance counselor, Gail Fields, reports that in the past three weeks the children have consistently arrived at school late and without lunch or lunch money. On one occasion a teacher reported that Christian was wearing the same clothes he wore the day before and they were very dirty. The mother has not yet responded to a note and call regarding the children's tardiness. Ms. Fields also reports that the school has recommended three months ago that Christian be evaluated for special education services as he appears to be delayed in several areas. However, the mother has not responded to the request.

Cameron appears to be small for his age. He was laid on the couch with a pillow propped up at his side to prevent him from rolling off the couch. He slept throughout most of the interview. When he woke up crying the mother did not comfort him, check on his diaper, or offer him a bottle for several minutes. Only after the CYS worker picked him up and commented on his needs did the mother prepare him a bottle and offer it to him.

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

Colin presented in the interview at the jail as calm and concerned about all three children's safety. He admitted that he drank too much the night before and that he had been physically abusive to Crystal both last night and in the past. He reported that he got upset after he came home and found Carley home alone watching the kids. He reported that he was worried that Crystal was beginning to leave the children alone again, but this was the first time he had proof that she was leaving the baby alone too. When Crystal returned he saw that she was high on drugs as she was stumbling around and almost fell on top of the baby. He searched her bag and found crack cocaine and a pipe. He denied knocking Christian over deliberately or accidentally. He reported that when the police arrived Crystal acted calm and accused him of abuse so the police arrested him and did not believe his concerns about Crystal's drug use. Colin admitted that he typically drinks every night but denied it was problematic or that the children's exposure to domestic violence was harmful to them. He reported that both Crystal and he hit each other when fighting but that it does not happen very much, maybe twice a week. Colin reported that they had gotten along very well after all the services ended, last year. However, Crystal became pregnant and was always sick. She lost her job so he was out all day working different jobs. He reports that Crystal started smoking marijuana again during her pregnancy to deal with extreme nausea and that she stopped sometime in her 8<sup>th</sup> month because she didn't want to get caught. Colin is clearly able to communicate needs, feelings and perceptions regarding the family situation. He became very emotional during the interview, but not disrespectful. He blames Crystal's alleged drug use for his drinking and violent behavior last night. (Colin, observation)

Crystal presented as hostile and uncooperative. Initially she freely reported on Colin's behavior. She accused him of drinking excessively every night and beating her throughout her pregnancy and afterwards. She reported that domestic violence seldom occurred in the past, and became more frequent as she became sicklier throughout her pregnancy and after she was fired from her job for taking so much time off. She reports that Colin continues to sell drugs and won't share his money with her or the children. Crystal presented in a very emotional affect and spoke

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in rapid and sometimes slurred speech. When asked questions about her conduct last night, she became angry and offended. When asked about taking the phone from Carley, she used profanity and accused Carley of lying and stated that “she will get it when she gets home from school.” When asked about possible use of crack cocaine, Crystal refused to speak to the CYS worker any longer and demanded that the CYS worker leave. Crystal appears to lack self-control (e.g., substance abuse, leaving the kids unattended). She appears to have a poor self-esteem. She has a significant substance abuse problem (e.g., reportedly has relapsed using alcohol and crack cocaine). It appears that she places parental responsibility on Carley and then faults Carley for disclosing family interactions to outsiders. Crystal has become extremely guarded about her conduct. (Crystal, Colin, Carley, Christian and observation)

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

Crystal has previously been found to speak fondly of Carley and Christian and appeared to be proud of them. However, in this interview before this assessment could be made Crystal became resistant and uncooperative in response to specific questions about her behavior. It is of concern that her response to Carley’s disclosure resulted in Crystal using profanity and stating that Carley would “get it” when she returned home from school. When asked to clarify, the mother stated that Carley was “no stranger to the belt.” Based on interviews with the children, Crystal and Colin, there appear to be strong attachments between the mother and the children. However, it appears that Crystal habitually requires Carley to take on the parenting role for her two younger brothers. Colin was unable to identify any positives with his current family. He reported he resented the responsibility of providing for Crystal’s other two children and that only Carley did anything around the house, but she couldn’t make a decent meal. He reported enjoying spending time with the baby, but complained that with working multiple jobs and long hours he is not home much. He reported that he will not change diapers as he finds it disgusting and woman’s work. When the mother is not home, he asks Carley to do it. He reports that Carley loves playing little mother and she is better at it than Crystal. Colin reported that although he married their mother he does not have “parenting” or “discipline” responsibility for the two older children. Carley and Christian report being fearful of him since he started hitting their mother. Neither of them want to see or live with him again after the incident last night. Crystal reported that Colin hasn’t spent any positive time with any of three children in several months. Colin also reports that Crystal, since resuming her use of drugs does not help the children with their school work or gets them up in the morning. Colin and Carley report that Carley get her and Christian’s breakfast in the morning. (Colin, Crystal, Carley and Christian)

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

Crystal is primarily responsible for the discipline of the children. Both Crystal and Colin report that Colin has no responsibility in this area. Colin and Carley both report that Crystal frequently uses physical discipline on the children by using a belt strap or telephone cord. Colin reports that the children are well behaved but Crystal will let them stay up late one night and then discipline them the next night if they do stay up late. (Crystal, Colin, Carley)

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## FAMILY ASSESSMENT FORM

<b>Date of Safety Assessment: 11/28/200-</b>		<b>Type of Assessment: Conclusion of the Investigation</b>				
<b>I.</b>	<b>Family Name: Smith</b>	<b>Case number: 0101010</b>			<b>Caseworker Name:</b>	
Suf	Child's Name	Age	Suf	Child's Name	Age	
A	Carley	11				
B	Christian	5				
C	Cameron	3 mos.				
Caregiver Name		Rel	Date Seen	Caregiver Name		
Crystal Smith		M				
Colin Leavitt		SF/ F				
<b>II. Identify Safety Threats Below</b>		List each child by name or suffix in the column. Note: only select Yes if the safety threshold was met			Explain how safety threshold was met/not met (Safety Threshold: vulnerable child, specific, out-of control, imminent, and serious harm likely)	
Date of Face to Face Contact:		xxx	xxx	xxx		
1. Caregiver(s) intended to cause serious physical harm to the child	Y					Colin knocked Christian down causing facial injuries to his lip, eye and cheek. Crystal disciplines children with a belt strap and implied that she would strap Carley for speaking to CYS.
	N	A	B	C		
2. Caregiver(s) are threatening to severely harm a child or are fearful that they will maltreat the child	Y					Caregivers have not threatened to severely harm the children.
	N	A	B	C		
3. Caregiver(s) cannot or will not explain the injuries to a child	Y					This threat is not present at this time as there are no observed or alleged injuries to either child.
	N	A	B	C		
4. Child sexual abuse is suspected, has occurred, and/or circumstances suggest abuse is likely to occur	Y					There is no evidence of sexual abuse of either child at this time. There are no indicators or behaviors that would suggest abuse has or is likely to occur.
	N	A	B	C		
5. Caregiver(s) are violent and/or acting dangerously	Y	A	B	C		Both caregivers engage in violent/dangerous behavior towards each other resulting with infant grabbed and while caregivers were intoxicated and physically fighting. Christian was knocked down and injured Carley and Christian have confirmed violent or dangerous behavior by both caregivers.
	N					
6. Caregiver(s) cannot or will not control their behavior	Y	A	B	C		Colin refuses to curb drinking and states his intent to continue to beat Crystal. Crystal refuses to cooperate with the investigation to determine her intention regarding her past behavior. Reports from Colin and Carley support the conclusion that her drug use is out of control and it has a serious dangerous impact on the children's

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	N						safety as she frequently leaves an infant in the care of young children who cannot meet the infant's needs rendering this child unsafe. Caregivers' behaviors directly affect their parenting, judgment, and lack of protectiveness, perceptions about child safety.
7. Caregiver(s) reacts dangerously to child's serious emotional symptoms, lack of behavioral control, and/or self destructive behavior	Y						This threat does not appear at this present time as the children do not demonstrate serious emotional symptom, lack of behavioral control, and/or self-destructive behavior.
	N	A	B	C			

8. Caregiver(s) cannot or will not meet the child's special, physical, emotional, medical, and/or behavioral needs	Y						This threat does not appear at this present time. There is no information that the children have special, physical, emotional, medical, and/or behavioral needs at this time.
	N	A	B	C			
9. Caregiver(s) in the home are not performing duties and responsibilities that assure child safety	Y	A	B	C			Crystal leaves for many hours several days a week. Crystal requires 11-year-old Carley to care for a 5-year-old and an infant. Crystal does not provide formula or food for the infant resulting in a serious risk of harm to the infant who was fed sour milk and vomited. Crystal ignored infant's need during home visit by not attending to her crying infant's need for care. Colin requires Carley to change Cameron's diaper and refuses to provide direct care to infant. Colin is in jail.
	N						
10. Caregiver(s) lack of parenting knowledge, skills, and/or motivation presents an immediate threat of serious harm to a child	Y	A	B	C			Colin fails to understand impact of DV and excessive alcohol on ability to parent young children. Crystal refuses to cooperate and engage in a discussion regarding allegations. Crystal has unrealistic expectations on 11-year-old to care for a 5-year-old and an infant. As a result of their young ages and their inability to protect themselves, the threat of serious harm to all three children exists.
	N						
11. Caregiver(s) do not have or do not use resources necessary to meet the child's immediate basic needs which presents an immediate threat of serious harm to a child	Y						This safety threat is not present at this time. There is no information that the caregivers do not have resources to meet the children's basic needs.
	N	A	B	C			
12. Caregiver(s) perceive child in extremely negative terms	Y						Both caregivers appear to view both children in a positive light. However, Crystal expresses anger at Carley for disclosing information to CYS.
	N	A	B	C			
13. Caregiver(s) overtly rejects CPS/GPS intervention; refuses	Y						Colin cooperated with the interviewer and says he would accept assistance.

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access to a child; and/or there is some indication that the caregivers will flee	N	A	B	C			Crystal refused to cooperate and told interview to leave home but has prior history of cooperation. Crystal threatened to strap Carley upon learning she spoke with CYS.
14. Child is fearful of the home situation, including people living in or having access to the home	Y	A	B	C			Carley presents as depressed and preoccupied with the family situation. Christian presents as withdraw. Both children report that they are afraid of Colin and were frightened by the domestic violence that occurred last night.
	N						

### III. Are Safety Threats Present? Yes? No? If Yes, complete the following:

**Discussion Protective Capacities:** A protective capacity is a specific quality that can be observed and understood to be part of the way a caregiver thinks, feels, and acts that makes him or her protective. The purpose of determining whether or not a caregiver has protective capacities is to 1) determine if the child can be safe with that caregiver, 2) to determine when a child could be safely returned to the home, and/or 3) to determine if the case can be closed. Protective Capacities can be absent, enhanced or diminished. Consider each identified safety threat. What protective capacity must be enhanced and in operation to mitigate that threat? For enhanced protective capacities, describe specifically how that protective capacity would prevent the safety threat from reoccurring in the near future.

Caregiver Name	Safety Threat By #	Child Suffix/ Name	List the Caregiver Protective Capacities which, when enhanced AND used, would mitigate the safety Threat.	Indicate if the Protective Capacity is enhanced, diminished or absent. For enhanced protective capacities describe how the selected capacity prepares, enables or empowers the caregiver to be protective. Will the caregiver(s) be able to put the protective capacity into action?
Crystal	5,6,8, 9, 10, 14	A & B & C	The caregiver demonstrates impulse control.	This is a diminished protective capacity. Crystal has relapsed and her use of drugs compromises any protective capacities she usually has had. Crystal also demonstrates that she is currently unable or unwilling to demonstrate impulse control as is evidenced by her frequent leaving of all three children unsupervised.
			The caregiver has a history of protecting	This is a diminished protective capacity. Crystal has left an infant and a 5-year-old alone. She requires an 11-year-old to provide them with supervision. In the past, Crystal has demonstrated the capacity to apply learned skills such as providing appropriate supervision and substance abuse coping strategies. She is not currently demonstrating these skill sets. Crystal must be able to demonstrate how she can draw from her prior success.
			The caregiver expresses love, empathy, and sensitivity toward the child; experiences specific empathy with the child's perspective and feelings	This is a diminished protective capacity. While Crystal shares that she loves her children she does not fully recognize or understand the long-term emotional impact her drug use, exposure to domestic violence and lack of supervision has on her children.
Crystal	10	A	The caregiver has accurate perceptions of the child	This protective capacity is currently absent for Crystal. She is unaware of and lacks sufficient understanding of child development and has parentified her eldest child, Carley. Crystal's expectation is for Carley to provide care and supervision to Christian and Cameron when she is engaged in drug use.
Colin	5,6,8, 9, 10, 14	A & B & C	The caregiver demonstrates impulse control.	This protective capacity is currently absent. When confronted with Crystal's leaving the children unattended, Colin's response is to drink and engage in domestic violence in the children's presence resulting in all of the children's physical safety to be compromised.
			The caregiver understands	This is a diminished protective capacity. He engages in

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			his/her protective role	domestic violence in the children's presence. Colin reports an unwillingness to provide his infant child some basic caretaking activities and relies on an 11-year-old child to perform these tasks. He has previously demonstrated a willingness to be part of his step-children's lives and has demonstrated this interest by marrying their mother. However, he does not engage in actively parenting or disciplining these children.
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**IV. Safety Analysis:** As part of your analysis, respond to the following four questions:

*How are safety threats manifested in the family?*  
 Mother's current level of drug use currently impacts negatively on her ability to provide adequate care and supervision to the children. Mother leaves the children home alone to locate and use drugs, leaving a 5-year-old and an infant alone and sometimes under the care of an 11-year-old several times a week. The children's step-father, Colin, and father of the infant also is present in the household, however, his response to mother's behavior is to drink excessively and engage in domestic violence in the children's presence. This violent behavior on at least one occasion presented a physical threat to two of the children, when 5-year-old Christian was knocked down and 3-month-old Cameron was grabbed by father while fighting with mother. Colin is currently incarcerated and charged with assault and public intoxication. Mother's judgment is impaired by her drug use. She believes 11-year-old Carley is capable of caring for Christian and Cameron in the absence of an adult caregiver. In addition, both Carely and Christian exhibit anxiety and depression symptoms and report being scared of Colin. Christian is withdrawn and appears to be developmentally delayed. The 911 audio tape supports the conclusion that all three children were exposed to a traumatic event.

*Can an able, motivated, responsible adult caregiver adequately manage and control for the child's safety without direct assistance from CYS?*  
 No, currently both caregivers in the home demonstrate diminished protective capacities and are unable to assure the children's safety with assistance from CYS.

*Is an in-home CYS managed safety plan an appropriate response for this family?*  
 No, the supports available to the family cannot be put into place in the children's own home. Due to mother's inability to put the children's need for constant supervision above her own need to seek out and use drugs and a lack of resources that could be put into place in the home of origin. Given the mother's current lack of cooperation and unwillingness to discuss allegations regarding her drug use and leaving the children unattended a CYS managed comprehensive safety plan would not be an appropriate response for the family at this time. The children cannot be cared for informally by the maternal grandmother in her residence as she is currently suffering from diabetes and living in a nursing home. Brian Smith, maternal uncle, previously provided support to the family. However, Crystal's current hostility is preventing her from discussing her situation with the caseworker or other family members. The whereabouts and availability of Christian's father is currently unknown. Carley's father, who lives out-of-state, reports that he cannot be a resource for Carley, at this time as, according to him, his residence is not stable and unsuitable for a young girl. He refused a request to provide Carely support at this time, but said he would meet with the CYS worker when he "gets a chance."

*What safety responses, services, actions, and providers can be deployed in the home that will adequately control and manage safety factors?*

**V. Children Who Were Not Seen:** Every effort should be made to see each child in the family face-to-face to determine if they are safe. If there is a child in the family that was not seen (e.g. child runaway), list their name and provide justification as to why they were not seen, how long it has been since someone has seen the child and the plan identified to locate the child and to assure that child's safety.

Child Name	Age	Justification
All children were seen		

<b>VI. Safety Decision -</b>	List each child by name or suffix						
<b>Decision Date:</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> </tr> </table>						

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<p><b>Safe:</b> Either caregiver’s existing protective capacities sufficiently control each specific and identified safety threat or no safety threats exist. Child can safely remain in the current living arrangement or with caregiver. Safety plan is not required.</p>					
<p><b>Safe with a Comprehensive Safety Plan:</b> Either caregivers’ existing protective capacities can be supplemented by safety interventions to control each specific and identified safety threat; or the child must temporarily reside in an alternate informal living arrangement. No court involvement is necessary; however a safety plan is required.</p>					
<p><b>Unsafe:</b> Caregivers’ existing protective capacities cannot be sufficiently supplemented by safety interventions to control specific and identified safety threats. Child cannot remain safely in the current living arrangement or with caregiver; caregivers can no longer retain custody, court involvement is required. Safety plan is also required.</p>	A	B	C		
<p><b>VII. Signatures of Approval</b> (Requires Supervisory Discussion)</p>					
	<b>Case Worker Name: Rob Detter</b>	Signature			Date
	<b>Supervisor Name: Gail Marachi</b>	Signature			Date