

The Conceptual Framework of Intake

Several critical activities must occur during the intake assessment:

- The worker must establish the framework for family-centered practice by approaching the family in a collaborative manner, communicating that the agency's interests and responsibilities are to protect children and strengthen families, and by beginning to establish the casework relationship with family members.
- The worker must use casework strategies that reduce resistance, and that build trust and rapport with family members, to create a safe environment that encourages families to disclose pertinent information, and to participate fully in the problem-solving process.
- The worker must gather information that validates or refutes the allegation cited in the report. While the purpose of the intake investigation is not simply to refute or substantiate the allegation, accurately determining the scope and circumstances of recent maltreatment are an essential part of the initial investigation, since a history of maltreatment is usually a strong predictor of potential future risk.
- The worker must contact all identified persons who might have information regarding the family, their situation, and the report allegation. Face-to-face interviews should occur with the alleged child victim, the parent or primary caregiver, the alleged perpetrator, and all other members of the family system. Contacts must also include all persons who have first-hand knowledge of the allegation, such as collaterals, other professionals who have been involved with the family, or witnesses. Discretion should be used in order to maintain the privacy of the family.
- The worker must gather pertinent information to identify and weigh the interacting effects of risk and safety factors, in order to establish the degree of risk to the child(ren) and the likelihood of harm in the foreseeable future.
- The worker must identify and initiate interventions that protect children who are at high risk, yet that prevent the need for removal and placement whenever possible.
- The worker must complete appropriate documentation of all information to substantiate or refute the allegation, and record the likelihood of future harm.
- The worker must prepare and present appropriate documentation and testimony in situations when juvenile court action is required to protect the child.
- The worker must prepare the family for ongoing service intervention and case transfer to the ongoing worker.

Adapted from *Field Guide to Child Welfare* by Judith S. Rycus and Ronald C. Hughes