PART 1:

MELINDA'S CASE

Three (3) initial referrals were received in the latter part of November, 1985 from a neighbor, an LCB agent, and a teacher. Cindy, the mother, was accused of having parties and providing alcoholic beverages to teenage boys. She was 26 years old, and had been separated from her husband for about 4 months. It was also reported that she was living with an 18 year old paramour, Mike. There were 5 children in the home: Phillip, age 8; Christopher, age 7; Jennifer, age 5; Melinda, age 3; and Michelle, age 1. The 8 year old child, Phillip, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and autism. Mother was eventually arrested by the LCB and convicted of providing alcohol to minors. She was placed on probation. A home visit was made by a caseworker. The family was residing in a 3 bedroom apartment in one of the local housing projects for low income families. The children appeared to have a good relationship with mother, and home conditions were adequate for the family. A nurse was visiting the family and helping with Phillip, who was also in a special school. The public school reported no major concerns with the other children. No services were provided to the family at this time.

On January 20, 1986, the agency received a call from the State Police. A neighbor had reported that she had seen welts and bruising on Melinda and Jennifer. When questioned, the children stated that mother's paramour, Mike, had hit them with a stick. The report on Melinda was Childlined for physical abuse. A subsequent investigation revealed that Melinda had several welts on her left leg and some black and blue marks on her buttocks. Jennifer had 3 relatively faint red marks on her buttocks. The injuries were not very severe, but there was concern because mother was allowing the paramour to use corporal punishment to discipline the children.

1. Discuss the case in your small group. Based on this limited information, how would your group proceed in this case?

2. What additional *"key"* information would your group like to have in order to make better decisions on how to proceed?