

## Script for Washington Case Middle/Work Phase

### Introduction:

Three weeks passed since the assessment interview. Tracey Spencer maintained contact with Charlene once each week during that time, once by telephone and twice in-person. Tracey also spoke with Thelma Louise each week regarding progress. Thelma initially suggested that visits occur three-times-a-week for the 1st month; however, Charlene stated she was only available on Tuesdays and Thursdays. When Thelma visited the apartment unannounced on a Wednesday to drop off a parenting skills workbook, Charlene opened the door only partially and took the workbook. Thelma noticed a man sitting in the living room. Charlene did not introduce him. In one interview with Dwight, Jr. and DeeAnn, the children stated that their mother has three different men that come to see her on different days. The children stated that the men never hurt the children. DeeAnn admitted to seeing their mother in the bedroom with a man in the bed on several occasions. The caseworker scheduled a home visit and interview with Ms. Washington to discuss progress on the goals and to assess safety and risk in this ongoing or middle phase of the casework process. The worker uses general, more open-ended questions in assessing change and more narrowly focused questions when exploring specific concerns.

**CW:** Hi, Charlene. (*Ms. Washington requested that the caseworker call her by her first name.*)

**Client:** Hi, Tracey. Come on in. (*Client motions toward the sofa.*)

**CW:** Thanks. I noticed you have a different hair style. It looks great. (*Compliment*)

**Client:** Yeah, I needed a change and took a chance on this cut and style.

**CW:** Well, Charlene, as I said on the phone, the purpose for my visit today is to review progress on the goal plan and to reassess the safety of the children. I brought a copy of the plan that we can review together. Does that work for you? (*Clarification of Purpose; Reaching for Feedback*)

**Client:** Sure, I'm clear until I have to pick up Malik and Melanie from daycare.

**CW:** Good, so, tell me about any changes since I spoke to you last week.

**Client:** Not too much has happened. Dwight and DeeAnn have been getting along pretty well. DeeAnn seems to be responding well to the mini-timeouts when I have to get on her for her smart mouth. I haven't hit either of them since the in-home services started.

**CW:** That's excellent. How are you managing to do that, not hitting them? (*Seeking Details about Change*)

**Client:** Sometimes it's not easy, but I do it.

## Script for Washington Case Middle/Work Phase (cont'd)

**CW:** What's different about your thinking, feeling, or doing that is different from when you used to hit them? (*Holding to Focus*)

**Client:** Thelma has helped me to tune in to my anger as soon as I feel it starting. Before I kinda' let the anger fester or didn't really notice it until I was yelling and hitting. Me and Thelma work on my "anger thermometer" (client laughs). She uses this paper with a thermometer on it with degrees, "zero" being calm and "100" being me steaming and whippin' the kids. At different points up the thermometer, she had me identify my triggers, feelings, thoughts, and actions. Then, we looked at different ways to think about a situation and to calm down. It's workin' pretty good for me.

**CW:** You really clearly explained that. It sounds like you are working that part of the program pretty well. Is there anything different about how you think about yourself or the kids, especially DeeAnn? (*Giving Feedback; Asking for Additional Details about Change*)

**Client:** Hmm, let me think about that.

**CW:** Take your time.

**Client:** I think I had sort of a chip on my shoulder. I mean, I think I expected someone to take advantage of me or something, including the kids. I think I was getting ready to be mad about something all the time and ready to smack DeeAnn upside-the-head for pushin' me. Now, I think I'm a little more relaxed most of the time. And the kids are just kids. They're not out to get me, or at least they better not be (client laughs).

**CW:** So, now the way you look at life and the kids is different, not so defensive and ready to defend yourself. I'm sure that wasn't easy, but you did it. Good for you. (*Summarizing; Complimenting*)

**Client:** Thanks.

**CW:** In addition to your change in attitude, what's different in the way you act toward the kids?

**Client:** The biggest thing is that I'm not hitting the kids. If they make a mess, I just make sure they clean it up without me screamin' and then have them think about what they shoulda' done different not to make the mess in the first place. At first they gave me this dumb look when I asked them to think about it. But now they're beginning to think about not makin' messes in the first place. Also, I'm trying to spend a little more time doing things with them, like some games or drawing. They get timeouts if they don't listen, but like Thelma explained, make 'em short and make the kids think about the rule they broke and how to behave right.

## Script for Washington Case Middle/Work Phase (cont'd)

**CW:** Charlene, you're amazing. You've only been working on your anger and parenting skills for three weeks, yet you seem to have made a big difference in your parenting skills. I hope you are as proud of yourself as I am of your progress. (*Compliment*)

**Client:** Thanks.

**CW:** Who else noticed the changes?

**Client:** I don't know if I can take credit for all this, but my "ex", you know, the kid's father says the kids are better behaved on the weekends. Dwight's teacher says Dwight isn't getting in as many fights like he used to.

**CW:** Do you see any other changes in your life, or in the household?

**Client:** No.

**CW:** Thelma mentioned to me that when she dropped in on you on Wednesday that you had a visitor. You didn't introduce him. I was wondering who he is and if he had some connection to the children?

**Client:** He's just a friend.

**CW:** The reason I ask is that part of my assessing the children's safety is to understand who is part of their lives and your life, and how that helps or doesn't help the children and you to be safe. My purpose is not to pass moral judgment on you or manage your social life. How do you feel about what I just said? (*Clarification of Purpose and Role*)

**Client:** That makes me mad, alright. I don't get what business it is of yours who I see or don't see on my own time.

**CW:** Thanks for being honest with me. I think I'd resent someone asking me about my personal life, too. Let me explain why I asked you about your visitor. A number of kids that I work with have been abused physically and sexually by the boyfriends of their mothers. Sometimes people interested in harming kids start first by getting close to the parent and then finding ways to get the kids alone. The partner may become so important to the parent that the parent may allow the partner to discipline the kids in ways harmful to the children.

What I want to do is to help you to decide on who is good for your kids, and how to have a social life, while keeping your kids safe at the same time. Does that make sense to you? (*Further Clarification of Purpose; Reaching for Feedback*)

**Client:** It does when you put it like that.

## Script for Washington Case Middle/Work Phase (cont'd)

**CW:** I spoke to Dwight, Jr. and DeeAnn about their friends and about people who regularly come to the apartment to see you.

**Client:** And?

**CW:** I understand that different men come to see you on different days. The children have seen you in bed with them.

**Client:** (*Angrily*) What they be tellin' you that for?

**CW:** I think children see things and are very direct about what they see. I don't necessarily think they know what it all means. Awhile back I said that honesty was important for our work together. I'd like you to tell me about your friends.

**Client:** It's not what it seems. I'm no hooker doin' tricks with any guy that walks down the street. I have a few male friends that I like. I don't want to be tied down to any one man right now. They come see me on some days when they're off work and the kids aren't around. Sometime they help me out with some things around the house or take me shopping. They're just friends.

**CW:** How long have you known these men?

**Client:** I've known Tyrell, Dennis, and Clifford since me and Dwight, Sr. broke up.

**CW:** You said these men stop by when the kids aren't around, yet the kids have seen you in bed with them. (*Confrontation*)

**Client:** Sometimes the kids are off school or might be home sick or something.

**CW:** What do you think about your kids seeing you having sex with your friends?

**Client:** I know it's not a good idea.

**CW:** Then what are you going to do about that? (*Demand for Work*)

**Client:** I need to tell my friends "No" when the kids are around.

**CW:** Have you said "No" to your friends before?

**Client:** Sometimes.

## Script for Washington Case Middle/Work Phase (cont'd)

**CW:** What is it going to take for you to say “No” every time the kids are home?

**Client:** I guess I just have to be strong about it.

**CW:** On a scale of zero to ten, with “zero” being that you have no confidence that you can say “No” to any of your friends and “ten” being that you have every confidence that you can say “No” to your friends when the kids are home, what number would represent your confidence level now? (*Scaling*)

**Client:** (*Thinks for a moment*) I guess I would have to say a seven.

**CW:** How come you picked that number?

**Client:** I’m okay saying “No” to Dennis and Tyrell, but Cliff is a real sweet talker and can get me to give in.

**CW:** What is it going to take you to boost, with Cliff, that number to an eight or nine?

**Client:** I guess I need to remember that my kids come first. I need to tell Cliff that, if he is my friend, he needs to understand and respect that.

**CW:** Let’s imagine that Cliff is supposed to come over tomorrow and you just found out that the kids are going to be home from school. You call Cliff. Tell me what you would say to him? (*Rehearsal*)

*(Client and caseworker work on what the client will say to Cliff and plan responses to what pressure Cliff might place on Charlene to change her mind. The rehearsal ends when Charlene and the worker are satisfied that Charlene is able to maintain her decision to say “No” to a visit. The worker also explores the consequences to Charlene and her relationships should she not allow a visit when the children are home. The worker believes that the negative consequences are not so severe that they would cause Charlene to back down)*

**CW:** I’d like you to have a chance to practice saying “No” to Cliff with some support. How about you calling Cliff the next time Thelma is here. You rehearse what you are going to say to Cliff. If you feel yourself about to give in, tell Cliff that someone is at the door and you will call him back. You can work with Thelma about what to say when you call back. Is that okay with you?

**Client:** Okay, I’ll try that.

**CW:** I need to ask you a question that I ask all the parents with whom I work. Are drugs a part of your life or your relationships with your friends?

## Script for Washington Case Middle/Work Phase (cont'd)

**Client:** *(Bristles a little)* I don't do for drugs for or with anybody; and that's the truth.

**CW:** One other thing, Charlene, you are very important to your children. They need you and they need you to be healthy. How are you protecting your health when you are having sexual relations with one of your friends? *(Exploring a Well-Being Issue)*

**Client:** I make sure I practice safe sex. I don't want any more kids right now; and, I sure don't want to get HIV. The guys have to wear protection.

**CW:** When I asked you about the visits by your men friends, I said that I learned about that from your kids. What are you going to do or say about that with Dwight and DeeAnn?

**Client:** Well I'm not going to punish them if that's what you mean.

**CW:** Good. I think it's important for them to be able to talk honestly and openly to you, me, and Thelma. The most important thing is that they feel safe and that they can trust you.

*(Note: The caseworker may choose to work with Charlene about exactly what she is going to say to the children about this issue, and may elect to be present when the mother talks to the children.)*

When I talked with Dwight, Jr. and DeeAnn, both of them said they feel safer and more relaxed at home and that you hadn't hit them since Thelma began working with you. I'm very proud of you and how hard you have worked these past few weeks. *(Giving Feedback)*

**CW:** Is there anything else you can think of that is or could be an obstacle to keeping your children safe or taking good care of them?

**Client:** Nothing I can think of now.

**CW:** Okay, let's go over the plan of activities for the next two weeks. Then, I'll be on my way. *(Exploring Next Steps)*

