

WILLIAMS FAMILY EXERCISE

Directions: Review the information outlined below. Then document your risk assessment of the family. The trainer will be available to answer any questions that you have during the exercise.

Family consists of the mother, Mary Williams, age 25; father, Frank, age 27; and their three children, Susan, age 7; James, age 6, and David, age 3. Family resides at 2121 South 21st Street, in a city in your county. A referral was received from school nurse, C. Barton, from Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. James Williams was observed to have three 1 inch welt marks on his left arm. When asked how he got the marks, James said that he was playing ball in the house and broke a window. His mother became angry and hit him with her belt.

A review of agency records found one prior involvement with the family in August 1993. At that time Susan was referred because she had telephone cord marks on her back from being hit by her mother. A CPS report was indicated due to the severity of the injuries and because Susan had experienced severe pain as a result of being hit. She was unable to lean back in her chair for several days because the injured area was very tender. The family was serviced for six months, no other abusive incidents occurred. The parents were resistant to continued services and the case was closed at that time.

During the CPS investigation, the worker learns the following information: James stated that his mother hit him with a belt. He said that this mother usually disciplines him by hitting him. He appears to be telling the truth. James said that he is not afraid of his mother, except when he does something bad, like breaking a window. The injury consisted of three, nickel sized welts to the left arm. James stated that it hurt when he was being hit, and for a few minutes afterwards, but that it did not hurt now, unless the area was touched "hard." He had no other injuries. James stated that he had been hit in the past by his mother whenever he was bad, but never had a marks as a result of being hit in the past.

Susan and David were also examined by the worker and found to have no injuries. Interviews revealed that James was the only child who was physically disciplined by the mother at the present time. Susan stated that she had not been hit by her mother since the last time the agency was involved with the family. She also stated that David was never hit by either of the parents because he was the baby of the family. Both children denied ever being hit by their father.

James and Susan are often absent from school and when they do come to school, they are often hungry. Susan has been absent 10 days, and James has been absent 8 days. Both children are frequently late and often appear to be hungry. The children state that they get themselves up for school. The children didn't have a warm coat, nor boots.

James frequently gets into fights at school. Susan tries to boss the other children and has few friends. Susan claims that she is the one who cares for David most of the time, because her mother is usually tired. The children denied that their mother used drugs or alcohol. However, they did state that their father drank every night when he was home. They did state that their father and mother routinely had heated arguments and that they always yelled at each other. They admitted to seeing the father push the mother on several occasions when he was angry, but denied that they ever saw him hit her. They denied ever seeing father drunk.

Mother was interviewed and initially denied hitting James, but eventually admitted to hitting him on the day he broke the window. She said that this was the first time that she has ever hit him, and later admitted to hitting him often when confronted with the statements made by James and Susan. She pointed out that she stopped hitting Susan after the last involvement with the agency. Mother seemed overwhelmed with caring for the children. She stated that her husband believed that child care was solely the mother's responsibility and he never helped with the child care responsibilities. She stated that James can get out of control at times and that he rarely listens to her. She denies that her husband was ever abusive to her, and dismissed the yelling and pushing as his way of showing that he loved her. She stated that Frank works as a garbage collector and that they often fight over lack of money.

Frank was home at the time of interviews in the home, but always left the room shortly after the worker arrived. During a brief conversation with the worker he stated that the children were Mary's responsibility and that parenting was the woman's job. He did state that hitting children was alright for a parent to do because they have to learn to listen. He stated that since he was not the one who left the injury he did not see the point of meeting with the worker. He did not mind if the worker wanted to meet with his wife or his children. The worker was unable to observe any interactions between the father and the children. Mother stated that he rarely had any real interactions with the children. She said he drank every night at home, after work. She said that he never gets drunk. Worker could find no criminal history on the father or mother.

The family lives in a two bedroom apartment. Mother and father sleep in one. Susan has her own room and James and David share a sofa bed. All utilities appear to be functioning although the apartment was cool. The home was quite cluttered but clean. David was found to be clean and appeared healthy. Medical records were obtained for all the children. Nothing in the medical records raised concerns regarding the care given to David except for the fact that he was behind in his immunizations.

Mother claims that she rarely sees her family after they had a fight two years ago. The family has moved seven times in the past three years. Mother blames "bad landlords" as the reason for all the moves, but admits to having difficulty with managing her money. During the interviews held with the family, Susan was observed caring for David in the adjoining room. Mother said that Susan is a big help and often assists her in caring for David. James was quite disruptive during interviews with family members. Mother threatened to punish him several times if he did not settle down.