

Definition of **Managing Protective Authority**

Definition:

Using the least amount of protective authority (force) required to achieve the legally mandated outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being for children. This means dealing with issues of authority, such as requiring the acceptance of mandated services or the client's past and possibly negative experiences with authority figures or social workers.

Steps in Managing Protective Authority:

- 1) **A**sk for and clarify expressions of confusion, dissatisfaction, etc.
- 2) **T**une in to and assess client's understanding and cooperation with purpose.
- 3) **T**une in to self as a way to manage one's own defensiveness, anger, fear, etc.
- 4) **I**nsist on safe behavior for everyone present. (End the encounter, if the participants will not agree to and use safe behavior.)
- 5) **C**larify what is/isn't within the role of the agency and your purpose & mission (focus on safety, permanence and well-being) and desire to work together to achieve those goals for **their** child(ren).

Definition of Managing Protective Authority **(continued)**

Managing Authority Example:

Scene: Living/dining room of parent's home. Everyone is seated. Fade in on conversation already in progress.

Worker: Please tell me more about how Tamika's bruises happened.

Mother: (defensively) I already told you, she got hurt playing. That's all you need to know, so I think we're done here.

Worker: No, I'm afraid that we're not done, Mrs. Washington. I have to learn whether her injuries were accidental or not.

Father: (angrily) You have no right coming here and saying that we abuse our daughter!

Mother: (dismissively) Yeah, just who the hell do you think you are girl, coming in and accusing us?

Worker: (pauses, then quietly) What makes you think that I'm accusing you of anything, Mr. Washington?

Father: You social workers always think that kids oughta be taken away from their families.

Mother: (defiantly and loud) We didn't do anything wrong.

Worker: (reflecting as a question) You both sound angry and suspicious about my visit here today.

Father: (defiantly and loud) You better believe we're angry.

Mother: We know our rights and we don't have to talk to you.

Definition of Managing Protective Authority **(continued)**

Managing Authority Example (continued):

Worker: Okay, (pauses reflectively) I can hear that you both have strong feelings about talking to me. As I said earlier, the purpose of my visit today is to gather information about your child's safety.

Father: So you're saying that if we don't talk to you now, then you'll try to take Tamika away from us?

Worker: My agency works really hard to help keep families together whenever possible, and removing children from home is only a last resort to keep them safe. My job is to ensure that Tamika is safe, and I believe that it's in her best interest if you both work *with* me. What happens next depends on your cooperation with my questions. If you don't work with me, then my agency is required to ask for a court order that legally forces you to participate.

Mother: Okay, so what else do you want to know?

Worker: What was Tamika doing when she got the bruises?
(Fade out)