

Intake Investigation Case Study

The hospital social worker has called the agency regarding a child who has been brought to the emergency room to report that abuse is suspected. The child is a two-year-old African American child named James Greene. He was brought to the hospital by Mrs. Martha Davis, his grandmother. Mrs. Davis indicated her 19-year-old daughter, Donna, had left James at her house two days earlier. Donna said she was going to visit a friend and would be back in a few hours. She had not yet returned. Mrs. Davis said that James had been crying continuously since Donna left him. Mrs. Davis at first thought he was just "under the weather," but then noticed his arm was becoming swollen and looked bruised. James does not yet talk, but he keeps pulling at his arm and he is not using it. The hospital x-rays reveal a spiral fracture of the upper arm. The examining physician thought it was probably an inflicted injury.

Mrs. Davis told the hospital social worker that Donna had left the child in her care before. This time she thinks that Donna went away with her new boyfriend. When Mrs. Davis was told that James' arm was broken, and that the type of break suggested probable abuse, Mrs. Davis said Donna often lost her temper but wasn't capable of hurting her child. Her boyfriend, however, was. She indicated she would care for James for a while until things were straightened out.

You are the investigation worker and have received the above report from the intake screener. There have been no previous reports of maltreatment received on either Donna or Mrs. Davis. However, there had been an open case on Donna, who had been placed in a group home briefly as a 17-year-old when she was out of Mrs. Davis' control and using drugs. She was returned to Mrs. Davis after six months in care and drug counseling, and the case was closed when she turned eighteen.

Develop a detailed plan for the investigation to include:

1. Who would you interview, and in what order? What would you say?
2. What factors might need to be considered because of the family's cultural background?
3. What types of family dynamics would you look for?
4. What type of documents would you need to build your case?
5. What would you do to assure the immediate protection of James?
6. How would you determine the likelihood that the grandmother was telling the truth and did not abuse the child herself?
7. How would you go about locating Donna? Her boyfriend?
8. Would you consider submitting this report to law enforcement officials pursuant to protocol?