



Overview of the Screening Process

Definition

Screening is the first stage in the child welfare services process. It is the process of determining whether a referral will be accepted as a report of child abuse or neglect, based on whether the referral falls within the guidelines established by the state law and agency policies, and whether the agency has an appropriate role with the child and family. Screening requires that workers develop specific skills that will enable them to be supportive of the reporter and obtain the information they need to make decisions about how to proceed on a report.

What Screening Involves

1. Gathering sufficient information to enable you to:

- Identify and locate the child(ren), the parents, or the caregiver;
- Determine if the report or referral is appropriate for child welfare services;
- Assess the urgency or seriousness of the situation; ALWAYS insuring child safety;
- Understand the relationship, roles, actions, and motives of the reporter.

2. Checking records to determine if the family or child which has been reported and is known to this agency or other agencies in the community. This might include:

- Central registry;
- Local office files, or office of previous jurisdiction, if family recently moved to area;
- Hospital or mental health (may require a release signed by parent or caregiver).

3. Decisions which are made at the screening level:

- Whether the report is appropriate for child welfare services;
- Whether the report requires immediate emergency response;
- Whether the reporter has ulterior motives for making the report;
- Whether to refer the case for assessment/investigation or refer the case to other community services.

May be reproduced for distribution in Workshop Sessions only/Copyright 1989 by the Institute for Human Services.