

The following is the case vignette used during training sessions on how to complete the *CIS-2008 Maltreatment Assessment Form*.

INTAKE ASSESSMENT: SARAH AND JASON

Referral Summary:

Date: Oct 6/08: A caller contacted the office with concerns that Jason, a young baby, was being left alone by his mother. The caller lives across the street from Ms. Smith and has known the family for four or five months. The caller indicated that Ms. Smith lives in an apartment with her little girl who looks about four or five, and her baby boy who is about eight or nine months old. The caller has watched Ms. Smith leave the house with her daughter at lunchtime, walking the girl to school a few blocks away. The baby is not with her. Ms. Smith sometimes returns within 10 or 15 minutes, and other times she returns after a longer period. The caller has watched this happen six or seven times since the start of the school year. Today she noted that Ms. Smith was gone for at least 45 minutes and that the baby was alone in the apartment the whole time, although Ms. Smith was now back at home. The caller knows that Ms. Smith has a boyfriend who stays overnight occasionally.

Date: Oct 7/08: The worker attended the home of Ms. Smith (26) at 10 am. Ms. Smith was surprised to see the worker at her home but agreed to let the worker in. She apologized for the house being untidy as she had not been able to clean up yet this morning.

The kitchen had a large pile of dirty dishes on the counter and in the sink, including several half-full baby bottles. The worker looked in the fridge and cupboards, and noted adequate provisions. Crumbs and pieces of dirt were stuck to the carpet. Toys and dirty dishes were all about the living area. The beds were all unmade and Sarah's bed had no sheets. Jason's crib was sour smelling but free of toys. The bathroom was very dirty. The window was broken and a large piece of glass was on the floor.

Ms. Smith indicated that she has been unemployed since Sarah was born. She relies on social assistance to pay her bills. She has used the food bank a few times. She has more money since moving to this subsidized apartment four months ago. She indicated that she has an on-and-off boyfriend named John; he does not help with the kids. Ms. Smith was raised in another town. Her parents and two brothers remain there.

Ms. Smith has no history of CAS involvement as a child.

Sarah was talkative and friendly. She showed no signs of anxiety or fear in front of her mother. Sarah proudly told the worker what a big girl she was as she could dress herself and make her own breakfast. She thought it was nice to let her mom sleep in.

When asked directly about leaving the baby at home, Ms Smith admitted that she has had to do this once or twice as she finds the trip to school conflicts with the baby's nap. The worker asked Sarah if she ever babysat her brother and Sarah stated that her mother had "never-ever-ever" left her alone at home. When asked how long she was gone, Ms. Smith said she took Sarah straight to school and came home; leaving Jason sleeping alone for a maximum of 10 minutes. The worker asked about Ms. Smith's usual child care and Ms. Smith indicated that she rarely needed a babysitter but would call on her friend to watch her kids if she had to go out. The worker advised Ms. Smith that under no circumstances could she leave either of her children alone.

Near the end of the visit the worker asked to hold the baby, and noted that his sleepers were damp. She asked Ms. Smith to change him. Ms. Smith put Jason directly on the dirty floor and changed his diaper. He did not have a diaper rash, and he had no observable bruises. While on the floor Jason picked up some debris from the floor and put it in his mouth.

The worker advised Ms. Smith that conditions in her home posed safety hazards to her children – namely the broken window and glass in the bathroom, and the dirty living areas. Ms. Smith agreed to clean the

home and call her landlord to fix the window.

The worker informed Ms. Smith that she would be receiving ongoing visits from the agency to help her establish appropriate child care routines and to support in organizing the daily tasks of family life. The worker had Ms. Smith sign a release form so she could speak with both the family doctor and Sarah's school.

Date: Oct 7/08: Ms. Q is a kindergarten teacher. Ms. Q expressed concern as Sarah often arrives in rumpled clothes, with dirty hair and face. Some days she smells unclean and the teacher has heard other children make fun of Sarah's smell. Sarah has told her teacher that she is late because she has to wait for her mom to put her brother down for his nap before they can walk to school. Sarah is frequently late for school.

Date: Oct 8/08: Phone call to Dr. Jones's office. The office confirmed that an appointment had been made for both children and the doctor will call the worker after she has seen the family again.

Investigation Conclusions:

This case involves the neglect of Sarah and her brother Jason. Jason has been left unsupervised more than once. This comes after Ms Smith was previously investigated and cautioned for inadequate supervision of Sarah. Sarah appears to take on numerous parenting tasks including the soothing and supervision of her baby brother as well as preparing herself for school. In addition, the home is dirty and poses several dangers to the children.

Outcome:

Case to be transferred for ongoing services.