

2021 Applied Learning Community – Feedback on Learning Application #4

Lessons Learned from Access Case Record Reviews

Strengths

- 30 local child welfare agencies completed Learning Application #4
- In general, when information was documented it was in the corresponding section of the CPS Report
- Agencies demonstrated strong documentation in Domestic Violence
- The majority (29 of 30) screened-in the CPS Report consistent with Standards

Areas of Opportunity

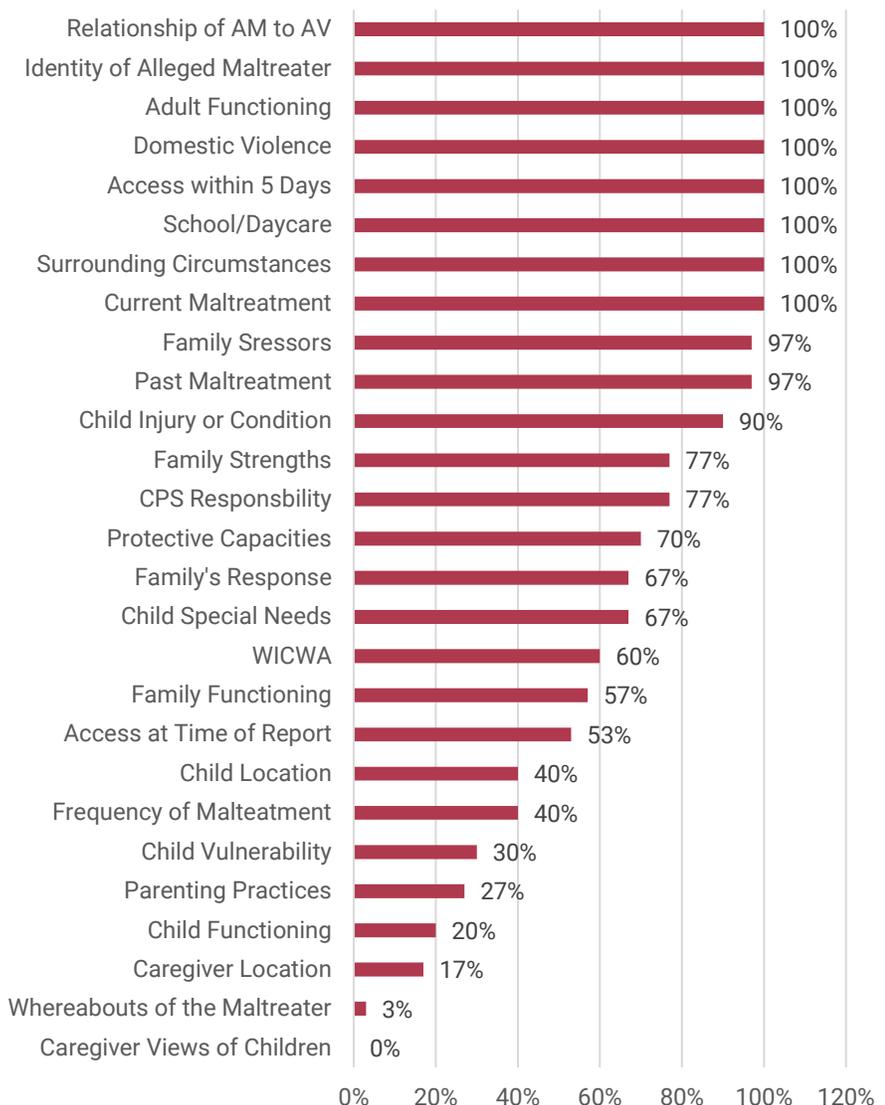
- Understanding when to document information about all children in the household vs. alleged victims
- Documenting the whereabouts of the alleged maltreater(s) and access to the children at time of the report
- Documenting adequate information in Family Functioning, Strengths, and Stressors
- Identifying all alleged maltreaters (i.e. the father's girlfriend, Janet)
- Identifying Present Danger and understanding *In Process of Occurring*

Results ~ Information Gathering

The Access Case Record Review Instrument models the CPS Report template in eWiSACWIS. Each question (and sub-questions) in the CPS Report are operationalized in the Access Case Record Review Instrument. The goal of the Access Case Record Review Instrument is to assess what pieces of information are documented, if the information documented includes all required subjects (e.g. allegations, victims, children, alleged maltreaters, parents/caregivers), whether the information is adequate (i.e. sufficient, quality) and if it is in the corresponding section. If there is no information about an item, the review instrument assesses whether there is documentation that clearly states whether the reporter was asked about the specific items.

Figure 1 (right) shows the percentage of CPS Reports where there was documentation about 27 of the information gathering variables (due to it being a practice case, some variables were excluded) or if there was information to support the reviewer was asked about a specific piece of information.

Figure 1: Documentation of Information Gathering Items



ICWA

Standards require Access workers to ask the reporter whether the alleged victims might have American Indian heritage and, if so, with what tribe or tribes the victims might be affiliated. Sixty percent (18/30) of agencies documented ICWA information and *five of those eighteen included all required victims.*

In the practice case, the reporter (Jenny) knew that the father's girlfriend (Janet) was American Indian, however, this question is asking about the heritage of the alleged victims. A sentence could have been written as: "Janet is believed to be from the Oneida tribe per reporter, worker asked about all victim(s) in the household. The youngest girls are also native; however, the two boys are non-native."

Practice Reminder:
When assessing American Indian heritage, make sure to ask the reporter (and document) about American Indian heritage for *all alleged victims.*

Current and Past Maltreatment

Most agencies documented current and past maltreatment, however, some agencies focused on the physical abuse allegation (the current injury to Junior's head and his dislocated shoulder at 5 years old). *It is important to ask the reporter about all forms of maltreatment, for all victims.* In the practice case, capturing information about the domestic violence incident and the fact the younger children were left home alone was important. In addition, missing the neglect information caused agencies to miss the identification of three other victims in the household.



Potential Practice Questions:

"Have any of the other children been hurt from intervening in the domestic violence?" "Have you heard about the children being left home alone previously?" "Is this the only time you have heard that the children were home alone?"

Surrounding Circumstances

All 30 agencies documented surrounding circumstances. Two-thirds of the agencies provided adequate documentation for surrounding circumstances. Related to the domestic violence incident, some agencies did not explore the knife incident in detail. In some of the reports, case reviewers only knew that the father (Joe) was holding a knife and the context surrounding the knife was not documented. In other agencies' reports, case reviewers knew that Joe threatened Janet with the knife and how he held it to her in a threatening manner. Related to the physical abuse concerns, some agencies did not ask further questions to document how Junior intervened and got hurt during the domestic violence incident, which would then support Present Danger. In terms of the neglect concerns, some agencies did not ask more questions around how long the young children were home alone, what precipitated them being home alone, or when they were home alone, etc.

Child Injury or Condition (alleged victims only)

Ninety percent (27/30) of agencies documented child injury, *but only nine included all the alleged victims.* Agencies documented the physical abuse injuries, *but often missed the condition of the other alleged victims.* Agencies would have benefitted from documenting about any fear or worry the children had from being left home alone and/or being witness to domestic violence.

Child Functioning (all children)

A third of the agencies documented child functioning and a fifth included all the required children. In general, documentation on school/childcare was strong, however, there was limited information about child location, special needs, and vulnerability. This was a missed opportunity given the reporter was the mother of the two boys and likely had more information about child functioning and special needs, especially for her own children. Most agencies did not include the oldest child (Lily) who was not home at the time of the incident. *It is important to document all children in the household for child functioning, regardless of whether they are identified as an alleged victim.*

Practice Reminder:
Documentation about child functioning should include information pertaining to child location, school/daycare, special needs, and vulnerability.

Whereabouts of the Alleged Maltreater and Access to the Children

No agencies documented the whereabouts of the alleged maltreater, which was pertinent in this case given that present danger was identified. These questions are critical as they inform response time and are operationalized in the Access Review Instrument into the following questions: (1) Whereabouts of the alleged maltreater, (2) Access to the children at the time of the report, and (3) Access to the children within the next five days.



Potential Practice Questions:

“When does the father get home from work?” “Do you know his work hours?” “Do you know when Joe started taking care of Sierra?” “Do you know if they are at home right now?” “Do you know if they had plans to leave the home today?”

Domestic Violence

There was strong documentation in this area across most agencies. Ninety-seven percent (29/30) of the agencies documented some information about domestic violence and two-thirds provided adequate information. The majority (27/30) of agencies accurately indicated domestic violence was currently present in the household.

Family’s Response to CPS & Parental Protective Capacities

This is a two-part question that includes the family’s response to agency intervention as well as the parent(s) protective capacities. Information regarding the parent’s behavioral, cognitive, and emotional protective capacities should be documented in this section.



Practice Opportunity:

About half of the agencies documented some information about protective capacities. *Both Janet and Joe should have been included in this section*, however, only one in six agencies included both Janet and Joe. No agencies documented *behavioral, cognitive, and emotional* capacities for both.

Given the reporter was the mother of the two boys and knew the father and girlfriend for a significant amount of time, it is probable she would have had more information about protective capacities. This information can inform safety and response time.

Adult Functioning

All 30 agencies documented some information about adult functioning and included both parents (Janet and Joe) in the household. In most cases, documentation reflected their employment. Only two agencies documented adequate adult functioning information and it is reasonable the reporter (Jenny) would have had more information about adult functioning given she was once married to Joe and has known Janet for the last eight years.

Practice Reminder:
Consider who the reporter is - a family member/parent will likely have more information than other reporters.

Family Functioning, Strengths, and Stressors

About half of the agencies documented family functioning, four in five documented family strengths, and almost all agencies documented family stressors. Although most agencies documented some information in this section of the CPS report, it was not adequate. Documentation included, “Joe and Janet have been in a committed relationship for 8 years.” This provides information about family functioning and strengths but is minimal. Given who the reporter was, agencies missed an opportunity to solicit additional information.



Potential Practice Questions:

“How does the family communicate as a blended family?” “Who is the primary decision maker within the family?” “How does the family respond to crisis/problems that arise?”

Identification of the Alleged Maltreater and Relationship to the Child/ren

All agencies documented some information about the alleged maltreater and their relationship to the children, however, about half of the agencies identified both the girlfriend (Janet) and the father as the alleged maltreaters consistent with Standards. Although there was a varying degree of information documented about the girlfriend’s involvement, there was information learned during the report to support she did not respond appropriately after she learned the children were left alone or react when Joe slammed Junior’s head into the concrete wall.

Results ~ Safety Assessment

The Access Case Record Review Instrument assesses whether Present Danger is identified rather than specific, individual Present Danger Threats. Less than half of the agencies identified Present Danger consistent with Standards and just over half of the agencies identified possible/likely Impending Danger consistent with Standards (see Figure 2 below).

When agencies did not identify Present Danger, the most common missing threat was *child is unsupervised and unable to care for self*. The younger children were left in a precarious position to care for themselves and tried to cook on a gas stove. This is dangerous and it was reasonable that severe harm could have occurred.

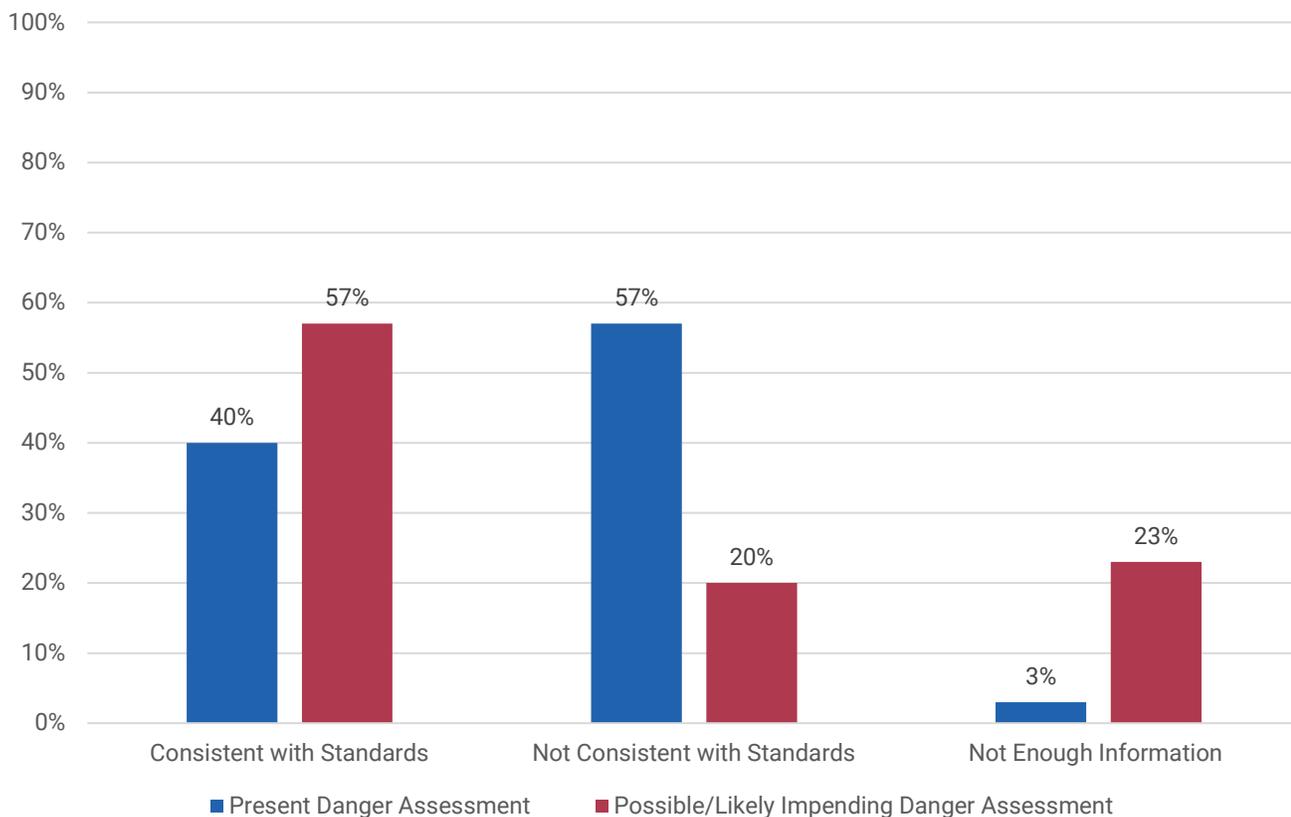
Practice Reminder:
Identifying specific Present Danger threats is important when determining whether to mitigate response times and can help set up an Initial Assessment worker in their assessment (and give potential implications for Protective Planning).



Practice Opportunity:

The concept of *In Process of Occurring* was the most common error in the identification of Present Danger. In the practice case, Joe continued to leave his younger children in the home alone and was responsible for caring for the three-year-old during the day while Janet worked. Additionally, the threat of domestic violence was in process of occurring and shows a pattern of escalating violence since Joe had a knife and was threatening Janet.

Figure 2: Assessment of Present Danger and Possible/Likely Impending Danger (n=30)



Results ~ Screening Decision and Response Time

Ninety-seven percent (29/30) of agencies screened-in the CPS Report consistent with Standards. There were two agencies that screened-in the report as an Alternative Response pathway which was not consistent with Standards given there was Present Danger.

Of the 29 agencies that screened-in the CPS Report, 11 (38%) screened-in with a same day response time consistent with Standards and one (3%) screened-in with a response time of within 5 business days, but identified how the response time was mitigated consistent with Standards.

Of the remaining 17 agencies that screened inconsistent with Standards, nine (31%) screened-in with a response time of 24-48 hours and eight (28%) screened-in with a response time of within 5 business days.

Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned

Agencies would benefit from a booster on the concept of *In Process of Occurring*. In addition, agencies should document when the reporter is asked and does not know the information. This will help supervisors know when reporters should be contacted for additional information, if needed, for decision making purposes. As mentioned throughout this report, it is also important for agencies to consider who the reporter is and what information can reasonably be gathered from that individual. Improvements to the CPS Report template in eWisACWIS would help clearly identify what pieces of information pertain to alleged victims vs. all children in the household and alleged maltreaters vs. all parents/caregivers in the household.

Individual Agency Feedback

If any agencies have questions or would like individual feedback on Learning Application #4, please contact DCFChildWelfareCQIprocess@wisconsin.gov.