

Extent of Maltreatment

This question is concerned with the maltreating behavior and the immediate physical and psychological effects on a child. It considers what is occurring or has occurred and what the results are (e.g. hitting, injuries, and trauma).

Observations and interviews are used to answer this question. Collateral sources of information (doctors, teachers, relatives, friends, etc.) are useful to both add to and check information gathered.

Information about extent of maltreatment includes:

- Type and Severity of maltreatment
- History of the maltreatment – Include prior child welfare history
- Description of specific events
- Description of emotional and physical symptoms
- Identification of the child and maltreating caregiver
- Identification of any cultural considerations around the maltreatment

Describe what abuse occurred:

- Physical Abuse – Describe injuries. Document with photographs, medical reports, LEA reports, etc.
- Sexual Abuse – Describe child's statements of abuse, as well as any corroborating witness accounts. Document information from Advocacy Centers, police reports, perpetrator statements, etc.
- Neglect - Inadequate food/shelter – Describe home environment and child's condition. Photograph home environment.
- Medical Neglect – Describe child's condition. Document information from medical staff.

Describe how the child was impacted:

- Any lasting results of the maltreatment: Surgery, blindness, scarring, etc.
- Any emotional and behavioral observations: Fearful, clingy, nightmares, tantrums, suicidal, running away, etc.
- Child's physical state: Hungry, dirty, medical needs, etc.

Describe details about:

- Severity – Pattern or progression of abuse.
- History – Similar prior incidents, both related to the affected children, as well as history regarding the perpetrator with other families.

Identify victims and perpetrators:

- Name who the maltreating person is. Consider if there is more than one perpetrator.
- Name the affected child or children.

Circumstances

Surrounding the Maltreatment

This question addresses what is going on at the time that the maltreatment occurs. This question is concerned with understanding why maltreatment happened in this particular family.

Information about circumstances surrounding the maltreatment includes:

- The duration of the maltreatment: Multi-generational abuse? Recent stress event?
- Caregiver intent concerning the maltreatment
- Caregiver explanation for the maltreatment and family conditions
- Caregiver acknowledgement and attitude about the maltreatment
- Other problems occurring in association with the maltreatment – consider substance use or mental disturbance, etc.

Describe the intention of maltreatment

- What was parents' intention?
- Does parent acknowledge maltreatment?
- Was the parent impaired (substance abuse, mental health) or otherwise out-of-control when this happened?
- What was the situation that preceded or led up to the maltreatment?
- What is their attitude about what happened?
- Do they believe it was maltreatment?

Describe other impacts:

- Is the family isolated?
- Is violence pervasive?
- Is there anyone exercising power and control over any of the adults in the home? Did this impact the maltreatment?

Child Functioning

This question is concerned with a child's general behavior, emotions, temperament and physical capacity. It addresses how a child is from day-to-day rather than focusing on points in time, and it must consider a child's developmental level. The child's functioning should also address changes observed due to the maltreatment.

Information about child functioning includes:

- Capacity for attachment
- General mood and functioning
- Intellectual functioning
- Communication ability
- Social Skills
- Ability to express emotion
- Physical and mental health
- Functioning within cultural norms
- Developmental disability
- Medical condition
- Peer relations
- School Performance
- Independence
- Motor Skills
- Behavior

Describe child functioning:

- Describe your own observations of the child's mood, temperament, behavior.
- Utilize collaterals to inform about the child's functioning – both currently and prior to recent involvement when the family wasn't in the midst of a child welfare crisis.
- If the child is seeing a therapist or is school aged, be sure to include those sources of information.

Adult Functioning

This question is concerned with how the adults/caregivers in the family feel, think and act on a daily basis. The question focuses on adult functioning separate from parenting, though be clear: THE WAY ADULTS MANAGE THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES IMPACTS THEIR CHILDREN.

Information about adult functioning includes:

- Communication and social skills
- Coping and stress management
- Self control
- Problem solving
- Judgment and decision making
- Independence
- Home and financial management
- Employment
- Domestic Violence: Consider if anyone is exercising power and control over any of the adults in the home
- Citizenship and community involvement
- Rationality
- Self care and self preservation
- Substance use
- Mental health
- Physical health and capacity
- Functioning within cultural norms

Describe adult functioning:

- What's their day-to-day life like?
- How do they make decisions? Do they talk with anyone about decisions? Do they have family/friend supports?
- Employment: How do they earn money? Have they always worked? When's the last time they had had a job?
- How is their health?
- How their day-to-day life is managed or is it chaotic?
- What is their judgment or decision-making ability?
- Are they employed – do they have financial management?
- Are they rational?
- Are they open or defensive?
- Do they have emotional control? If not, what seems to be getting in the way (substances, mental health, abuse/trauma)?

Disciplinary Practices

This question is concerned with the manner in which caregivers approach discipline and child guidance. Discipline is considered in the broader context of socialization – teaching and guiding the child. This question is broken out from parenting generally because this aspect of family life is highly related to both risk of maltreatment and threats to child safety. Answer this both from the child’s perspective and from the parents’ - Note discrepancies.

Information about disciplinary practices includes:

- Disciplinary methods
- Concept and purpose of discipline
- Context in which discipline occurs
- Cultural practices

Describe disciplinary practices:

- What does the *child* feel is the purpose of discipline - keep child’s behavior managed, to cause pain so they will learn, to teach them respect
- What does the *parent* feel is the purpose of discipline - keep child’s behavior managed, to cause pain so they will learn, to teach them respect
- What the parent’s emotional state is when disciplining
- What does the parent understand about their child’s need for safety and protection
- What does the parent understand about how their discipline impacts the child
- What is the parent’s perception of their child – is it accurate
- What are the parent’s expectations of their child – are they realistic

Parenting Practices

This question explores the general nature and approach to parenting as well as the parents' satisfaction with being a parent. Some parents have little knowledge of child rearing practices. Other parents may know what is considered "appropriate" parenting, but choose their method based on how they were raised, how their partner does it, etc.

Information about parenting practices includes:

- Reasons for being a caregiver
- Satisfaction in being a caregiver
- Caregiver knowledge and skill in parenting and child development
- Caregiver expectations and empathy for a child
- Decision making in parenting practices
- Parenting style
- History of parenting behavior
- Protectiveness
- Difference in how the parent thinks and feels about each child

Describe parenting practices - Can they detail:

- Why they became a parent
- Whether they like being a parent
- How much time they spend with each child
- Expectations for each child
- What they like to do with each child
- What each child does best
- What they like about each child
- What they don't like about each child
- What works best for each child when he/she is sad, angry, or frustrated