

# Initial Contact: The first face-to-face contact with the family

## Background Notes

The first contact that you have with a family sets the stage for your future relationship with the family. Your demeanor, your actions and your words will play an important role in your ability to gather information from the family and to engage the family in a cooperative manner. Preparing for this initial assessment is critical. It is important to consider any history the agency has with the family, the safety threats reported, the best place to conduct your interviews with various family members and to consider questions that you need to have answered. It is also important to consider your own personal safety.

## Tasks / Assignments:

- Arrange with your supervisor to shadow an experienced CPS worker for at least one full day. For this particular activity it is essential to spend time with the worker as they prepare for their initial contact on an assigned referral.
- Identify at least three things that the worker does to prepare before going out on the assessment. Refer to the handout entitled "The Initial CPS Assessment" in the appendix. What strategies does the worker use?
- Discuss with the worker what factors they take into consideration when preparing to meet with a family for the first time. How does the worker plan for his/her personal safety? How does the worker prepare for the possibility of having to remove a child? Ask the worker if they have a "go out" packet and if so, what is included in it.

## *Discoveries:*

- *What did you learn that would assist you when you are preparing to meet with a family for the first time?*
- *What did you learn that would assist you in assessing the safety of children?*

## Initial Contact continued...

### Tasks / Assignments:

- What types of information does the worker gather?
- Following the interview, discuss your observations of the interview with the worker. Share your perceptions of how various family members might have been feeling during the interview.

*Discoveries:*

