



This script accompanies the movie and PowerPoint® presentation by the same name.

### **The Information Domains and Information Collection**

Welcome and thank you for participating in this E-learning module on Information Collection.

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### **Objectives**

Our objective is to introduce you to the foundation of sound decision-making, that is, quality information collection. At the end of this module, you will be able to state why these information domains are important to safety decision making; AND accurately identify and describe the six information domains.

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### **Overview of the six domains**

This session will introduce you to the six domains which are important to safety decision making. When you have finished this module, you will understand the importance of each domain, and you will be able to describe the type of information which is captured in each one.

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### **What information should you seek to collect?**

This session will introduce you to the WHAT- what information you should seek to collect on each case. The practicum module which accompanies this module will introduce you to the HOW - how to go about collecting this information.

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### **Why is the information important?**

Let's begin with why it is important to capture certain fundamental information about each family.

## Florida Safety Decision Making Methodology: The Information Domains and Information Collection

When a family is referred to DCF for a Child Protective Investigation, the most important decision that must be made is whether the child (or children) in that family are safe or unsafe. Our ability to make that decision is dependent upon the amount of information we can collect and analyze about that family.

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### Information Drives Decisions About Safety

Information Drives Decisions About Safety... that's an important concept going forward...

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### Forming a picture about the family

Think of it as if you were creating a photograph, or picture, of the family. Through the collection of information, you make a snapshot... of the way that family members function, what children are like, how vulnerable they are, what protective capacities the caregivers possess ... and much, much more.

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### The Hotline forms picture of the family

Taking each call, the Hotline Counselor begins to form a picture of the family. The CPI further details the picture and, if the case is opened for Ongoing Case Management, the Case Manager develops an even fuller picture of the family.

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### Understanding the family...

A complete understanding of the family comes from a purposeful, focused process of family engagement which allows us to get to know the family.

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### How to engage the family?

As we think about how to engage the family in order for us to get to know them, let's look in more depth at each of the domains—and the type of information we want to know in each area.

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### **Domain 1: Extent of Maltreatment**

The first two domains are related to the maltreatment or the abuse or neglect that is being reported. So the first domain is the Extent of Maltreatment. This is straightforward information concerned with the facts and evidence that describe the specific maltreatment.

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### **Nature and Extent of Maltreatment**

The nature and extent of the maltreatment will include, but not be limited to: the type of maltreatment, the facts and evidence to support your findings, a description of specific events, the condition of the child, and the identity of both the child victim and perpetrator responsible for the abuse or neglect.

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### **Domain 2: Surrounding Circumstances**

The second domain, which is also related to the maltreatment, is entitled Surrounding Circumstances. The surrounding circumstances domain captures the context or situation that either precedes or leads up to the maltreatment or the context or situation which exists while the maltreatment is occurring.

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### **Examples of Surrounding Circumstances**

The surrounding circumstances domain includes peoples' perceptions, attitudes, and explanations about the maltreatment. It also includes the history of the maltreatment and duration, or how long has it been happening. By selectively examining this domain separately from the actual maltreatment, we achieve a greater understanding of the seriousness of the maltreatment. Was the incident premeditated or deliberate? Was it cruel or bizarre? Progressing in severity or involved the use of alcohol or drugs? Was a weapon or object used or a threat

made? Did the parent provide an explanation of the use of force? Did a crisis or chronic stress precipitate the event or is the parent's explanation consistent with the injury?

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### **Domain 3: Child Functioning**

The third domain is Child Functioning. This domain of information collection applies to every child living in the household in which we are assessing. In other words, all children in the household are included, regardless of whether they are the identified victim or not.

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### **Examples of Child Functioning**

When we consider child functioning, we are hoping to understand how the child is from day to day... their general functioning. We must not limit our focus to simply understanding how they were behaving when the maltreatment occurred, or how they acted when we were in the home. Some of the things we want to understand include the child's level of trust, their sociability, self-awareness, verbal or communication skills and their independence and assertiveness. Some of the other child functioning areas include motor skills, overall intellect and self control. We also want to consider their behavior patterns and mood changes, their eating and sleeping habits, and their sexual behavior.

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### **Key Factor of Child Functioning**

A key factor to understand in terms of overall child functioning is the child's age. Our consideration of the child's behavior must be understood with respect to their age appropriateness.

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### **Key Factor**

For example, a child who is demonstrating caretaking behaviors such as preparing meals for him or herself or supervising younger children may be understood to be inappropriately mature given their age. Their life experience may have required them to learn these skills and we would view this functioning in light of what is "normal" for a child of that chronological age.

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#### **Domain 4: Adult Functioning**

Our fourth domain is Adult Functioning. For this information domain, we ask ourselves the question, how does the adult function in terms of daily life management and general adaptation? It's important to realize for this area that we are not looking specifically at adult functioning related to the child maltreatment, but much more broadly at how they function on a daily basis.

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#### **Adult Functioning (1 of 2)**

This domain is concerned with life management, social relationships, problem solving and meeting needs. Among the things you need to gather information about in order to assess adult functioning are communication skills, ability to relate to others, intellect, self-control, coping, impulsiveness and stress management.

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#### **Adult Functioning (2 of 2)**

This is the domain in which we consider adult mental health and substance use/abuse, focusing especially on how, or if, role performance is influenced by mental health or substance abuse. It is also important to remember that recent adult-related history is captured here, such as employment experiences, criminal history, and previous relationships.

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#### **Domain 5: General Parenting Practices**

The last two domains move us specifically into the consideration of parenting aspects. The fifth domain is General Parenting Practices. Once again, it is important not to get into parenting that was associated with the incident of the maltreatment. This domain is more broadly about parenting, basic care, affection, communication, expectations for children, sensitivity to children, knowledge and expectations related to

child development and parenting, viewpoint toward children, and parenting experiences.

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### **Domain 6: Disciplinary Practices**

The sixth and final domain is Disciplinary Practices. We want to consider the caretaker's approach to disciplining their children. This includes the parent's methods, the purpose or reason for disciplining, attitudes about and context of discipline. Finally we want to consider the relationship of the child's behavior to the discipline.

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### **Disciplinary Practices**

Discipline in this context is best understood as more than punishment or behavioral control, but it should more broadly consider socialization, teaching and guidance.

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### **Information domains summary**

So there you have a synopsis of how the six information domains can help you create a picture of the family. It is clear to see the value of such information when collecting information when making informed decisions about child safety.

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### **Further Information**

You will learn more about key safety concepts in the second e-learning module *Present and Impending Danger, Child Vulnerability, and Protective Capacities*, but let's look at a simple sort of map to further understand how the information in these six domains informs two key areas of safety decision making: Impending danger threats and caregiver protective capacities.

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### **Information about Impending Danger**

When we answer the questions, what is the extent of the maltreatment and what are the circumstances that surround the maltreatment, we reveal information about Impending Danger. For example, these domains inform us about basic resources the family might be lacking about living arrangements that might be dangerous, about caregiver's intentions or remorse in terms of the child's injuries.

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### **More Impending Danger (1 of 4)**

In the next e-learning module we will explore Impending Danger in more depth, but we want you to understand why information collection is important....because it forms fundamental safety decisions about impending danger. These are decisions that are made every day by CPI's....these are critical decisions.

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### **More Impending Danger (2 of 4)**

When we gather information about child functioning we also reveal information about impending danger. For example, child functioning helps us to understand if the child has exceptional needs that are not being met by the caregiver, it helps us understand if the child is fearful of people or circumstances in their home....

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### **More Impending Danger (3 of 4)**

When we gather information about adult functioning, it reveals information about impending danger. For example, we learn about any violence among the caregivers that might threaten the child, we learn about whether caregivers can control their behavior, this could be related to impulse control or mental health issues....

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### **More Impending Danger (4 of 4)**

Finally, when we learn about parenting practices and discipline, we reveal information about impending danger. For example, we learn about unrealistic expectations or negative perceptions; we learn about parental capacity to perform basic responsibilities; we learn about parenting knowledge, skill and motivation essential to parenting....

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### **Summary (1 of 2)**

Our picture of the family clearly reveals any areas in which we have impending danger...a critical step in safety decision making.

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### **Summary (2 of 2)**

We have explored WHAT you must know about the family, and we have revealed WHY we must know it. Safety assessment and management is the fundamental business of child protection. Sufficient information is the foundation of safety decision making.

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### **Quiz Directions**

The practicum which you will be completing following this module, will provide resource information to further understand the information domains, as well as exploring HOW you go about collecting information in each of these areas.

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## Q1

Please proceed to answer the questions which follow and thank you for your participation.

Last week, Mr. Jackson whipped his nine-year-old stepson Jason with a belt resulting in extensive bruising over the child's right thigh and left buttock area. Jason reports he had difficulty sitting for two days after the incident.

- a. **NATURE AND EXTENT OF MALTREATMENT**
- b. Circumstances Accompanying Maltreatment
- c. Child Functioning
- d. Adult Functioning
- e. General Parenting Practices
- f. Disciplinary Practices and Behavior Management

## Q1 Answer

The correct answer is (a) Nature and Extent of Maltreatment. Specific information is provided about the type and location of the injuries (bruising over thighs and buttock), the manner in which the injuries occurred (whipped with a belt), and the subsequent condition of the child (unable to sit for two days) to qualify this information as related to Domain One.

## Q2

Mr. Jackson is a "loner" with few adult friends. When he isn't working he typically spends all evening on the computer. Mrs. Jackson tells the CPI that her husband has been "moody ever since he returned from Iraq two years ago."

- a. Nature and Extent of Maltreatment
- b. Circumstances Accompanying Maltreatment
- c. Child Functioning
- d. **ADULT FUNCTIONING**
- e. General Parenting Practices
- f. Disciplinary Practices and Behavior Management

### Q2 Answer

The correct answer is (d) Adult Functioning because the statement provides a lot of information about Mr. Jackson's social relationships both within the family (spending all his time in the evening on the computer instead of time with the family) and external to the family ("he's a loner with few adult friends"). Another aspect of adult functioning described in the paragraph is Mr. Jackson's management of his emotions, specifically that he has been moody ever since returning from active duty in the Middle East.

### Q3

When you ask Mr. Jackson if he also spans his five-year-old daughter he says, "No, I only use 'timeouts' with her." When you ask the daughter about how often she is placed in timeout, she states, "What's timeout?"

- a. Nature and Extent of Maltreatment
- b. Circumstances Accompanying Maltreatment
- c. Child Functioning
- d. Adult Functioning
- e. General Parenting Practices
- f. Disciplinary Practices and Behavior Management

### Q3 Answer

The correct answer is (f) disciplinary practices and behavior management. The investigator obtained important additional information about the family's reported use of timeout as the main disciplinary practice when the five-year-old daughter was asked directly about it and she had no clue what the investigator was talking about. Since it's not part of the information provided, the investigator should ask additional questions about what happens when she gets in trouble and not automatically assume that the child knows what the term "timeout" means.

### Congratulations!

Congratulations on completing Module One: Information Domains and Information Collection.

Within the week you should also complete the discussion guide that accompanies this module. If you are not watching the module as part of a group exercise facilitated by your supervisor or assigned safety practice expert please contact them for a copy of the discussion guide. The

## **Florida Safety Decision Making Methodology: The Information Domains and Information Collection**

discussion guide is intended to provide additional resources and instruction so you can begin to apply the standards for information collection using the information domains introduced in this module.

One last thing, don't forget to get credit for participating in this e-learning module by going to your individual training screen in FSFN and selecting the training course titled Module One: "Information Domains and Information Collection."

Thank you for your participation!