FORENSIC PARENTING ASSESSMENTS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SECTOR

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Deena MCMAHON
Identifying Information

Assessor: Deena the Magnificent
Report Date: January 31, 2091
Requested by: Rudolf R. Reindeer

Family Constellation—who is in the family/how do they belong?
• List anyone in the home or those who will referenced in the report, so they are easily identified.
• List name, relationship to other family members, and DOB
Brief Overview

• Succinct but thorough enough to offer a glimpse of current concerns and why the assessment was requested.

• Mr. and Mrs. Claus were referred for a parenting assessment by their case manager, Rudolph, due to numerous reports of overheating their home and overworking their Elves. There have been multiple calls to the police and school records indicate that the 12 elves living in the home have not attended Santa’s workshop all season.
Assessment Protocol

- The following assessment includes a summary of the parent-child observations, along with a detailed look into factors which help promote or hinder successful parenting and attachment. Collateral documentation was reviewed prior to/after the interview and observations. The following assessment tools/tests/scales were used.
Assessment Content

• Observation with Mr. Claus, Mrs. Claus, and Elves, January 31, 2091, Santa’s Workshop, North Pole, MN.
• Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Claus date, location
• Record Review
• Collateral Contacts – who/when?
• Clinical summary, findings, and recommendations
Records Reviewed

• List all records reviewed.
• If you use information in your report from any of these sources, cite them in the body of the report.
Informed Consent

• Explain what informed consent is.
• Have them sign your form, if you have one.
• Explain why the report is being requested, what it will include, and how it will be used.
• Let them know how they will get a copy of the report and who else will get to read it, to the extent you may know.
• Have them sign ROIs for themselves and their children (If the agency has custody of the children, the case manager may sign those ROIs.).
Observations

• Parent-Child Observation 1: Date, location, and time
• Parent-Child Observation 2: Date, location, and time
• Be sure to list whichever home, agency, or visitation center was used.
History of Child Maltreatment or Parenting Concerns

• Parent’s version of events – how did your child end up in care/you end up in jail/CPS get involved?
• Previous CPS involvement
• Does the parent acknowledge or deny the validity of concerns?
• Does the parent take any/some/no responsibility?
• Does the parent think they could have prevented this intervention had they done things differently?
• Impact on the parent’s life
Parent-Child Relationship

• Longevity of relationship/parenting experience – How long have they parented this child? Who did the primary caregiving? Who helped them parent? Was child or parent often/sometimes absent?

• Parent’s ability to empathize with the child – this is huge. Ask: “What has this process been like for your child?”

• Parent’s ability to prioritize the child’s needs. “When I review your case file, will it read like you always put your child’s needs first? Even when you were mad, high, etc.?”
Parent-Child Attachment

• Attunement: Can they read and effectively respond to verbal and nonverbal cues?
• Reciprocity: Is there an easy call-and-response?
• Parent as Secure Base: Does the child seek out the parent for security and safety?
• Healthy Boundaries: Do they have a proximity-seeking pattern?
• Nurture: How often and in what manner is nurture offered?
• Parent Sensitivity: How does this look and how is it conveyed?
Current Circumstances

• **Nature, stability and environmental setting:** Has the parent demonstrated stability since first moving out on their own?
  • *Do they often move or are they planted in one community?*
  • *Do they couch-hop or count on friends and relatives?*
  • *Are they at risk of homelessness?*
  • *Is the home safe/clean enough?*
  • *Who lives in the home? Are people frequently in-and-out of the home with no boundaries?*
Financial Stability

• Educational history or plans
• Employment history, including any gaps
• Current income, including welfare, disability benefits, child support, pension, etc.
• Do they run out of money before the end of the month? If so, what do they do?
Health

• **Physical Health:** Include any disabilities/chronic conditions which might impact parenting (e.g. seizures, TBI, morbid obesity).
• Do they/the children have health insurance and a regular doctor?
• Do they take medications?

• **Mental Health:** Have they ever had a mental health eval? Were they given a diagnosis? Do they have any current symptoms?
• Do they take medications?
• Are they in or have they been in therapy?
Relationship Status and Stability

For each of the parent’s significant romantic relationships:

• How long were they together and why did they break up?
• Was this a healthy relationship? Was there any violence, police involvement, drug use, etc.? Did the kids witness any of this?
• Who did they have children with? Where are those children now and what kind of contact do they have?
Substance Abuse and Criminal Record

• Have they ever been arrested due to substance-related offenses?
• Did they have a chemical dependency evaluation?
• Have they ever been to treatment? How often?
• Are they supposed to provide UAs? Have any been positive?
• Do they have a criminal record of violence/assault, aggression, maltreatment, unlawful detainers? Any felony charges which might make finding housing and employment difficult?
Social Support Network

• Who can you count on for help when you need it?
  • *Offer examples such as you are sick and need someone to watch your child; your car broke down and you can’t pick up your child on time; you need a few bucks to make rent or buy food; you need a friend to talk to...*

• How long have these folks been in your life?

• Are your supports sober and positive?
Nuclear Family Experience

• Who raised you? If one or none of your parents, why?
• Describe your caregivers. Were/are you close to them?
• List siblings and birth order. Were/are you close to them?
• Who did you go to for help. Did you get it?
• Do you describe your childhood as happy? Did you feel loved and safe? Were your needs met?
• What is the parent’s attachment story?
Disciplinary Experiences

• Did they have a good role model for parenting?
• How did their parent discipline?
• Did they feel it was abusive or frightening?
• How does the parent discipline their own children? Does it work?
Significant Life Events

• Past losses, moves, death, abuse, neglect, molestation
• Get a sense of if they have resolved their trauma and what remains problematic in terms of being emotionally available to their children when they are triggered by past memories.
Cultural and Religious Identity

• What practices did their family participate in?
• What values or beliefs do they follow now?
• What beliefs do they want to pass onto their children?
• Are there significant cultural parenting practices (e.g. gender roles) which need to be considered?
Children’s Development

• **Development/health of the child:** Special needs, diagnoses, illnesses, behaviors, learning challenges, services utilized?

• **Individual characteristics of the child:** How does the parent describe the child? Strengths, weaknesses, talents?

• **Parent’s understanding of the child’s current and future needs:** Can the parent meet these needs now and in the future? Have they done so in the past?
Services

• What services have they used in the past?
• What services are they currently using?
• What is helpful?
• What additional services would they like or need?
• What does their case plan require? Are they compliant?
Hopes and Expectations

• What do they hope will happen/what is their ideal outcome?
• What has to happen before that can occur?
• What help do they need to make that happen?
• What is the most significant barrier to success?
Summary of Strengths and Concerns

- Notable strengths—describe both your and their perspectives
- Remaining concerns—what both you and they think
Collateral Contacts

• Speak with the treating mental health professionals, GAL, case manager, foster parent, teacher, babysitter, etc.

• *List who you spoke to but be careful about what is written in the report. Do not include information that may negatively impact this parent’s relationship with service providers.*
Referral Questions

• What is the likely impact of Mr. Claus’ rigid parenting style on the Elves?
• Is Mrs. Claus able to parent in a protective manner if Mr. Claus drinks too much eggnog?
• If the sleigh does not make it home, will Mrs. Claus trust Rudolph enough to seek help?
• What, if any, risk factors are present in the workshop and how can these be addressed?
Mr. Claus reported he rarely drinks too much eggnog. He denies that he overworked the Elves. Collateral records suggest otherwise (CHIPS Petition). Mrs. Claus has repeatedly stated she is afraid of her husband. She reported that when Mr. Claus is drinking, he has delusions about flying around the world in one night. It is the impression of this assessor that although Mrs. Claus has made many statements about wanting to leave her husband, she is unlikely to do so. This leaves the Elves at risk for both abuse and neglect. They should remain in care until Mr. Claus can demonstrate sobriety and Mrs. Claus has engaged with her own therapist.
Findings and Recommendations

• Be specific.
• Don’t make recommendations which cannot be fulfilled, such as a service that is not available in a certain community.
• Don’t overload the family. If many services are suggested, offer some idea of priority.
• If you do not think services will do any good, say so and WHY.
• Offer recommendations about permanency if you feel you can, and if the agency needs them and will present them.
Recommendations

• Mr. Claus should complete a psychological evaluation and follow all recommendations.
• Mr. Claus should complete a Rule 25 assessment and follow all recommendations.
• Mr. Claus should refrain from using any substances and cooperate with random UAs.
• Mr. and Mrs. Claus should work with a marriage counselor to help them resolve longstanding relationship conflict.
• The Elves should attend Head Start programming and be screened for learning readiness programs.