

MOCK TDM SCENARIO – AOC Training March 2007

The following is a fictitious CWS case scenario, created explicitly for the purpose of conducting this mock TDM. Any similarity to the real life names or situation of any particular person or family is strictly coincidental.

TDM Participants:

Cathy Chaos-Mayhem (27)- Mother of all three children

Michael Mayhem (41)- Father of youngest child, Charlene, stepfather of Abigail and Zack

Charles Chaos- Maternal Grandfather

Mary Chaos- Maternal Grandmother

Florence Nightingale- Current foster mother

Shirley Soberkleen- Cathy's NA Sponsor

Donna Duwell- Kinship support worker

Karen Kindly- Protective Services Worker

*William Wise- Protective Services Supervisor
– TDM Facilitator*

TDM on behalf of children:

Abigail Chaos (8)

Zack Chaos (2)

Charlene Mayhem (9 months)

The Chaos/Mayhem family came to the attention of Child Welfare Services approximately 4 months ago. The initial referral was received after a domestic violence incident occurred between Cathy and Michael, which resulted in a police visit to the home. Michael Mayhem was arrested at that time, but was released from jail and ordered to complete a 52-week domestic violence program. Michael was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident, and Cathy had been using methamphetamine.

The CWS investigation revealed that Cathy has had a long-term problem with methamphetamine dependence, dating back to the age of 17. This is also the third relationship that she has had with a partner involving domestic violence, though the authorities had never been notified of the incidents in her two prior relationships. These two men are the alleged fathers of Cathy's two older children, Zack (2) and Abigail (8). Cathy was never married to either of these men, both of whom live in Nevada, where Cathy had lived until 2 years ago. She moved to San Diego shortly after the birth of Zack. She met Michael at an AA meeting, and they married 4 months later.

Michael has attended AA meetings in the past, when he says a good friend had "convinced him that his drinking was a problem." He says that he has it under control now, and has learned to drink socially. He believes that Cathy does have a problem with

methamphetamine however, and says that it is her behavior when she is using or coming down that causes him to lose his temper.

Cathy has attended some self-help groups in the past regarding her drug use, but never entered a formal treatment program until she became involved with CWS 4 months ago. When she resided in Arizona, her parents stepped in to care for her children at times when her substance abuse became more serious, and therefore Arizona never received any reports of abuse or neglect on this family.

This is the third referral on this family since Cathy arrived in San Diego 2 years ago. The first two were regarding neglect, when Abigail's school reported that she had been absent frequently, and was often late to school when she did manage to get there. The school also reported some concern that Abigail's mother had forgotten to pick her up from school on two occasions last year, and on one of those two occasions sent a friend to pick her up after the school phoned her. The school personnel stated that the mother's friend appeared to be "a shady looking character," but that Abigail seemed to be familiar with him.

Cathy's parents recently moved to San Diego to be closer to their grandchildren, and have expressed concern that if Cathy doesn't "get her act together," she may lose her children permanently.

When the children were brought into custody, they were detained at Polinsky Center for two days, and then all three minors were placed in the licensed foster home of Florence Nightingale. Ms. Nightingale has recently asked that the social worker find a new placement for the children. She reports some irritation in dealings with the family over visitation issues, but mostly that there are things going on in her personal life that she needs to attend to at this time.

Karen Kindly- Protective Services Worker

You are the case manager for the Chaos/Mayhem children. In addition to what is covered in the vignette, the rest of what you need to know includes the following.

The two alleged fathers (paternity has never been officially established) are not involved in this case. The father of Zack (2) is incarcerated in Arizona and declined legal representation in this case. Abigail's father did not wish to be involved, and also declined representation and services. He has told you that he hopes that his daughter will be well cared for in foster placement or with a relative until her mother can care for her.

The foster mother, Florence Nightingale, has provided excellent care for all three minors, and you were very grateful that she was able to keep the sibling group together. She has complained to you on numerous occasions that Cathy, the children's mother, often calls at times that are inconvenient for her, wanting to talk to her children. She has not been successful in establishing good boundaries around this issue, and also says that she sometimes brings a friend or two along on her supervised visits, which Florence feels is inappropriate.

Ms. Nightingale cares for the children a great deal, but is having some issues with her teenage son at this time, and feels that he requires all of her attention. She would like the children to be removed from her home within the next few weeks if possible.

You are open to placing with the maternal grandparents, and have already done the necessary background checks. All that is left is the home approval, which can be completed very soon, if the grandparents are open to placement.

Your concerns include some parentification issues for the oldest child, Abigail, and some possible depression on her part as well. Zack (2) is developing normally, but is a handful, like all two-year-olds. There are no unusual concerns about the baby. Your hope is that the grandparents will take all three minors and have some sort of support system in place. You are also hoping that they will be a concurrent planning option.

Placement with the parents (either of them) is not an option at this time, given the short amount of time that has passed and the long history of substance abuse and domestic violence. As far as you have heard, mom is doing well in her treatment program so far, and dad is attending his DV groups, albeit reluctantly. Visitation for the parents is supervised at this time.

William Wise- Protective Services Supervisor

You are the supervisor for PSW Karen Kindly. Below is the information about the case, of which the social worker is also aware.

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The foster mother, Florence Nightingale, has provided excellent care for all three minors, and you were very grateful that she was able to keep the sibling group together. She has complained to the SW on numerous occasions that Cathy, the children's mother, often calls at times that are inconvenient for her, wanting to talk to her children. She has not been successful in establishing good boundaries around this issue, and also says that she sometimes brings a friend or two along on her supervised visits, which Florence feels is inappropriate.

Ms. Nightingale cares for the children a great deal, but is having some issues with her teenage son at this time, and feels that he requires all of her attention. She would like the children to be removed from her home within the next few weeks if possible.

You and the social worker are open to placing with the maternal grandparents, and have already done the necessary background checks. All that is left is the home approval, which can be completed very soon, if the grandparents are open to placement.

You and the social worker are on the same page about the idea of all three minors being placed with the maternal grandparents. As the supervisor, you want to be sure that the social worker is appropriately addressing concurrent planning issues and that the grandparents would set appropriate boundaries around visitation, etc.

Placement with the parents (either of them) is not an option at this time, given the short amount of time that has passed and the long history of substance abuse and domestic violence. As far as you have heard, mom is doing well in her treatment program so far, and dad is attending his DV groups, albeit reluctantly. Visitation for the parents is supervised at this time.

Florence Nightingale- Current Foster Mother

You are the kind-hearted foster mother of all three children. They have been in your care for the last four months, and you have a good relationship with them, for the most part.

You have recently requested that the social worker move the children to another placement. Your reasoning for this involves several issues. The first problem is some interactions you have had with the family members, but the most prominent issue is one of a personal nature. You have a teenage son who is acting out, and you believe he is using drugs and hanging out with unsavory characters. You feel that he is in need of all of your attention at this time, and you know that there is a reasonable chance that these children may need a permanent plan other than reunification, which you would not be able to provide for them. You can decide how much you want to reveal about your son's problems. The main issue is that you have things in your own life that need to be dealt with.

You do have several concerns regarding the family. For starters, you have had difficulty setting appropriate boundaries with Cathy, the children's mother. She calls to talk to the children at inappropriate times, despite your requests to stick with agreed upon calling times. When she meets you and the children for supervised visits, she often brings along a friend or friends, which you feel is inappropriate. You haven't really talked to her about this, because you didn't feel it was your place, but you have mentioned it to the social worker. Overall, the children are doing ok. The baby is fine, Zack (2) is a typical handful, but you have a few concerns about Abigail (8). Abby is quite parentified, and you have found it challenging to get her to leave the parenting to you. She is also sad at times, possibly depressed. She has not yet been put into counseling.

You have met the maternal grandparents at visitations, and think they seem nice enough. It is your hope that if the children go with them, you will be able to maintain some contact, at least for a while, as you've become somewhat attached to them.

If asked, you are willing to hang onto the kids until final approvals can be completed on the grandparents.

Cathy Chaos-Mayhem (27)- Mother of all three children

OK Cathy, here's your story...

You have three children by three different fathers, and are currently married for the first time to the father of your youngest child, Charlene. You have a long history of methamphetamine use and relationships with violent/controlling men.

Your biological father was abusive to both you and your mother. He left when you were 7 years old. A year later, your mother married Charles Chaos, who soon adopted you as his own daughter. You never witnessed violence between Charles (who you now consider your father) and your mother, but he is sometimes hard on you in relation to your drug use and what he sees as irresponsible parenting.

You entered into an outpatient drug treatment program 3 months ago. Since that time you've had one dirty test 2 weeks into treatment, but the rest have been clean. The eight weeks of clean time you now have is the longest time you've ever been clean while not being pregnant. You had a few sporadic episodes of use during pregnancy, but you did your best not to use, for the most part, while pregnant with any of your children.

You married Michael just under a year and a half ago. You were two months pregnant with Charlene at the time. There is no doubt that he is Charlene's father. As to the fathers of your other two children, neither of them has ever been very involved in their children's lives. Zack's dad is incarcerated for drug sales, and Abigail's dad has his own family now and hasn't seen her since she was about two. He occasionally calls to see how she is doing, but never really bonded with her.

Your husband is currently living with a friend while he attends domestic violence groups. You haven't started victims' groups yet, but intend to soon.

You love your children very much, and this CWS involvement has been quite a wake up call for you. You are glad your parents are close by now, but feel that they are somewhat meddlesome and you question their motives in coming to San Diego. You just want your children back in your care as soon as possible, and at this point you're feeling like your recent clean time should be enough evidence to show that your children are safe with you.

You have a certain amount of resentment toward your husband for going on and on about your meth problem, when you know for a fact that his drinking is a problem for him and that he is in denial about it. You're not sure how you feel about reconciling with him, but you are concerned about how you'll make it as a single mom financially.

Michael Mayhem (41) – Father of Charlene Mayhem (9 months)

So Michael....this is what's going on with you.....

You and Cathy got married just under a year and a half ago. Cathy was 2 months pregnant at the time you got married, and there was never a doubt that the child was yours.

You and Cathy met at an AA meeting and were instantly attracted to each other. You were there despite really thinking you had much of a drinking problem, and now you're convinced that you can drink socially without a problem (probably not too accurate, though). Cathy, however, is a different story. You think her meth problem is a significant one, and you get tired of waking up late at night, hearing her wandering around the house looking for projects because she's so wired. This has led to numerous fights between the two of you, and you have physically attacked her on several occasions, which for the most part you blame on her drug use and your understandable frustration. You're tired of her "loser friends" showing up at the house and hanging out all the time. You work long days (at the profession of your choice) and don't have time to supervise who comes around the kids all the time.

Even though you think it's lame, you willingly moved in with a friend to appease CWS while you attend some domestic violence groups. You still minimize your behavior somewhat, but can acknowledge that maybe there is some value to learning these skills to help you deal with your wife when she is difficult. You would like to reconcile, if she can get off the drugs. If not, you don't feel prepared to take on custody of your child on your own, but want to remain an active part of her life. You like your stepchildren fine, but don't yet see them as your own children. As far as placement goes, you know the kids would be better off with their grandparents than in licensed foster care, so you wouldn't fight that if that were the decision being made. Your own family is out of the area and you don't want them involved, nor do you feel that any of them would be appropriate caregivers for your daughter.

Mary Chaos- Maternal Grandmother

You and your husband, Charles, recently moved to the San Diego area (2 months ago) from Arizona. You wanted to be closer to your grandchildren, especially now that Child Welfare Services has become involved.

Cathy is your daughter, and the adopted daughter of your husband. Her biological father, your first husband, left when she was 7 years old. He had been abusive to both you and Cathy. You began going to therapy and becoming more empowered, and in that process he began to lose a lot of the control that he had over you, so he left.

You and Charles have cared for your two older grandchildren, Abigail and Zack, for extended periods of time in the past, due to your daughter's continuous struggle with drug abuse. You would now like to have your grandchildren placed in your care, but your husband has some reservations about this.

You want very much for your daughter to turn her life around, but you are skeptical due to the long history of drug abuse you have witnessed with her. You know it will be a really big commitment to take on the care of all three grandchildren, but you can't bear the thought of them getting "lost in the system" or ending up with strangers. You've tried to get through to your daughter, but she doesn't like to listen to you very much. You think her substance abuse began (and continues) due to her poor choices in friends. You get along ok with her husband, but worry about the domestic violence and think he drinks more than he admits to.

Cathy is your only child. Your own siblings live mostly in Arizona, but you do have a sister in the L.A. area who might be able to come to San Diego to visit on occasion.

Charles Chaos- Maternal Grandfather

You are the adoptive father of Cathy, and grandfather to her three children. You married her mother when Cathy was 7 years old, and adopted her as your own soon after that. You always had a good relationship with her until she started using drugs around the age of 17. Since then, you have struggled to get through to her, but have found her to be stubborn and mixed up with the wrong crowd.

You and Mary have cared for the two oldest grandchildren for extended periods of time when they lived near you in Arizona. You often had to step in when Cathy was off using drugs or running around partying too much. You love your grandchildren, but feel somewhat resentful that you are expected to repeatedly come to the rescue because Cathy just can't seem to get her act together. You know your wife wants to take over as the caregiver for all three children, but you wonder if she's being realistic in her expectations of how things will play out and the extent of the commitment that you would be making. In the end, you'll probably go along with it, but you definitely have some concerns.

Donna Duwell- Kinship Support Worker

You work with the Kinship Support Program. You are attending this TDM today as a community support person, in order to inform the grandparents about some services that will be available to them, should they take on the care of their grandchildren.

You will not need to say a lot in the meeting, but can explain to the grandparents that your program can offer them help in accessing respite care, services related to mental health, legal advice, help with the educational system, etc. You can also refer them to county-wide support groups for relative caregivers. You just want them to know that there is a support system in place for relatives who are willing to step forward and assist in the care of the children in their extended families.

Shirley Soberkleen- Cathy's NA Sponsor

You are the NA sponsor working with Cathy in her recovery. You've only known her for a month or so, since she had to get started with her treatment program before seeking out a sponsor. But in the time that you've known her, you've found her to be motivated to make positive changes in her life and to stay clean and sober.

You probably feel somewhat protective of Cathy, and want to defend her when her family gets too aggressive about her past drug use. You think it's important to recognize that recovery is a process that takes time and patience, and you believe that addicts should be given more time to reunify with their children for this reason.

Your role in the TDM is basically to be there in support of Cathy, and at times to remind other participants about the process of recovery.

Kara Seeker- Concurrent Planning Worker

You have spoken to the placement coordinator regarding this case, and learned that there is a foster family that is willing to have all three minors placed with them within a week or so. You are the person who will be in charge of the home study for the children's grandparents, should they decide to have the children placed in their care.

Remarkably, you had a cancellation this afternoon, and would be available to conduct the home study today if this works out for the grandparents. It will become clear in the TDM when you should reveal all of this information. When the facilitator (or anyone else) asks what the placement options are, you can mention the foster care provider that has been found. When a discussion begins around placing with the grandparents, and the need for a home study is mentioned, you can explain your availability to conduct the home study.