

Investigation Case Notes

Supervisor: Barb White

Social Worker: Ben Thomas

10/30/23:

This worker visited Marsha Taylor's home at 123 Maple Drive. Ms. Taylor and daughter Cara were at home. Older daughter Claire was at school. When I arrived, I saw Cara crawling around outside in the front yard, barefoot and wearing only pajama bottoms. Her hair was uncombed, and her face and hands were dirty. The front yard is not completely fenced, and there is no gate. Home is on a moderately busy street. Cats were foraging through trash bins located on the side of the house. Ms. Taylor came out to greet me. She appeared nervous and quickly picked Cara up and brought her inside. Once inside, I asked Ms. Taylor if Cara often plays outside alone. Ms. Taylor replied no and immediately asked me if the next-door neighbor called her in. Cara was squirmy and made several attempts to get away from Ms. Taylor.

Once inside the home, I saw dirty dishes piled in the sink and more dirty dishes on the counter. Trash was overflowing the trash can in the corner, and there were ants on the floor. The floors were dirty, and the surfaces of the kitchen table and coffee table were sticky and cluttered with old food, paper, and random items. The furniture in the living room was stained. I shared the allegations in the report with Ms. Taylor. She sat down and stood up several times while talking with me. I asked her about drug use, and she laughed and said, "I don't do drugs." I asked her if she would be willing to submit to a UA, and she said she had nothing to hide. I asked her to go to the Department later today for a UA, and she agreed.

Ms. Taylor confirmed that she lives in her small 2-bedroom home with her two daughters. The girls' father, Adam Davis, no longer lives in the home. Ms. Taylor said that she kicked Mr. Davis out of the house about a year ago because he was very critical of her, and they always were fighting. She said that the fights never got physically violent and that she didn't think it was good for the girls to be around all that screaming and yelling. She asked me to not be in touch with him because it would only cause more trouble. Ms. Taylor said that she and Mr. Davis never married. Mr. Davis had been providing her with money to care for the children in addition to paying the rent on the home. However, about 3 months ago he stopped sending her money. Ms. Taylor is not employed.

I then asked her if she has anyone to help with childcare. She replied that she doesn't need to leave her girls with anyone because Claire is very responsible for her age and can handle watching Cara. She said on one occasion she left the girls for longer than she had planned, and Claire took it upon herself to go to the neighbors because she thought she heard noises. She still doesn't know why Claire just didn't stay home like usual. Ms. Taylor asked me if I had any idea how hard it is to raise two girls with no support from their dad and family. She asked me what the legal age was for leaving kids alone. I let her know that we could talk more about finding family or others to help her with childcare. Ms. Taylor shared that she has a sister who can help her. However, her sister has her own family so she only calls when she really needs help. I asked if I could meet her sister, and she said yes. Ms. Taylor voiced anger about the report. She said it overwhelms her being a single parent with no support from family or the girls' dad, and she asked if I could provide help. I asked her again about drug use, and she again responded that she did not do drugs.

I asked if the girls have a doctor, and she stated that she takes them to the clinic for shots. I asked if Cara walks, and Ms. Taylor said she tries to walk holding onto furniture, but prefers to crawl. I observed Cara picking up small toys from the floor and having some difficulty in transferring them from one hand to the other. During my visit to the home, I noticed that Cara did not talk but would

point to indicate what she wanted.

Ms. Taylor stated several times that she needed help, and family was either not able or willing to support her. She stated she does not receive EBT monies and has little food. She did apply for TANF but still has to follow through with required documentation. She opened her refrigerator to show me she had a quart of milk, a six-pack of beer, a bag of carrots, half a loaf of bread, and Kool-Aid drinks. In the cupboards, she had a jar of peanut butter, a box of macaroni and cheese, a bag of rice, a can of beans, spaghetti noodles and sauce, and half a box of cereal.

I asked what time Claire gets home from school, and Ms. Taylor said she rides the bus and usually gets home at about 3:45 p.m. She displayed a nervous affect and cried several times throughout the interview. She also asked for help several times and stated that her girls love her. I told Ms. Taylor that I would get back to her soon and provided her with my contact information.

10/31/23 (Phone)

Phone call with school counselor regarding Claire. Counselor is familiar with Claire and said within the last year, Claire has had several unexcused absences and tardies. She qualifies for and receives free lunches. Staff have observed her asking other children for their milk and unwanted food. Claire is a below-average student. Her teacher has shared that she doesn't turn in homework, falls asleep in class, and typically hangs out alone on the playground during recess.

10/31/23 (Phone)

Extensive telephone call with Adam Davis, father. Informed him about the report and our investigation. Conducted basic psychosocial assessment and gathered historical information. Mr. Davis was dismayed to hear about the report. He indicated that he recently became re-employed and had not been able to provide Ms. Taylor money for his girls for the last few months. He has, however, continued to pay their rent, so the girls have a roof over their heads. He said he prefers to not be in contact with Ms. Taylor because they "don't see eye to eye on things" and have not in a long time. He indicated that when they were together, Ms. Taylor would often go off with friends for days at a time, and he would have no idea when she was coming back, which meant he had to stay home from work to care for the girls. He described Ms. Taylor as "irresponsible" and said whenever he tried to confront her about it, she would get hysterical, and they would have loud arguments.

I inquired about DV history, but he denied any, saying he was raised to never raise a hand to a woman and would never treat the mother of his children that way. He said he typically left whenever she got angry. He stated he would like to see the girls. He and Ms. Taylor never married. There is no formal child support arrangement and no established visitation plan. Mr. Davis said that he had been renting an apartment nearby but couldn't afford his rent and the rent on family's home. To save money, he moved in with his parents even though they live further away, and he had to find a new job. He hoped to be financially in a better position soon so that he could once again start sending Ms. Taylor money for the girls. Once he moved further away, it became nearly impossible to maintain visits as Ms. Taylor made it very difficult for him. At one point in the past, Ms. Taylor called the police on him accusing him of threatening her. He stays away because he fears she will have him arrested or a restraining order put on him, and that could affect his job and prevent him from ever seeing the girls. He thinks his family could be a good support system for the girls. He would like to be involved in whatever plan the agency has for them. I informed him that we are still completing our investigation and would be back in touch soon when the case was transferred to the ongoing case manager.

10/31 (Home visit)

Visited with Claire at her home after school. Ms. Taylor, Cara, and maternal aunt, Doris Wilson, were home. I noticed trash had been removed from inside the home and picked up from the

yard. The dishes, tables, and floor had been washed. Dirty clothing and assorted household items were still strewn all over the open kitchen/living room area.

I spoke with Claire in the room she shares with her sister. Clothing was everywhere, and there were no sheets on the twin bed she shares with her sister. Claire stated she tries her best to help her mom. She says her mom doesn't get up in the morning, and she makes sure her sister gets cereal before Claire rides the bus to school. She said that sometimes her mom's friends come over at night, and it is hard to sleep. She said one time her mom went somewhere with friends, and, when she got scared, she went to the neighbor's house to see if they could stay with her until mom came home. I asked if they spent the night, and Claire did not answer. I asked her if there were other times she felt scared. She didn't answer. Claire said that she likes to spend time with her aunt and that Mrs. Harris, the neighbor, was really nice.

I spoke with Mrs. Wilson, who is Ms. Taylor's older sister by 12 years. She said that Ms. Taylor had Claire when she was very young, but their mother was still alive at the time and was able to help Ms. Taylor and Mr. Davis until Claire started school. She said that she tries to help her sister and loves the girls. She has her own family but does what she can. When I asked if she could help Ms. Taylor with childcare, she immediately said she would be there for the girls because she didn't want them taken away.

Talked with Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Wilson together. Told them that I would need to review their case with my supervisor but thought that the family could benefit from services. I explained that I would also be drafting a safety plan to keep the girls safe at home and would review it with them. Both Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Wilson said that they would do anything that was needed so the girls didn't get taken away.

10/31/23 (Phone)

Spoke with neighbor, Mona Harris. Mrs. Harris said she feels sorry for the girls and often sees the toddler outside alone. She is cute but always looks dirty. She said she called in the report because she is concerned about the toddler being outside alone, and it seems to be happening more frequently. Ms. Harris said one time the children came over, and the older one said she was scared and asked if they could spend the night. Mrs. Harris said she let them sleep on her couch until early in the morning when Ms. Taylor came for them. She described Ms. Taylor's behavior as "questionable" and said she believes Ms. Taylor is on some drug. Ms. Harris stated she can tell when it is 9 p.m. each day because people start driving up to the home and don't leave until after midnight. She said some of the people that come to the house are known in the neighborhood for drugs. Mrs. Harris confirmed that Claire has come by her house now and again asking for food or milk for her and her sister. Thanked Mrs. Harris for the information and left her my number.

10/31/23 (Phone)

Spoke with clinic and received information that all well-child exams are up to date. The last exam revealed that Claire needs dental follow-up. The clinic had also recommended a follow-up visit and made a referral for Cara to be assessed for developmental delays. It had no record of Ms. Taylor keeping the scheduled appointments.

11/02/23 (Supervisor Staffing)

Reviewed case with supervisor. Completed safety assessment notes lack of appropriate supervision for children, lack of food, and generally unsafe environment. Completed risk assessment shows moderate risk due to younger child's age, mom's potential substance misuse, inability to follow through to obtain TANF/food stamps, and her lack of follow-up to obtain screenings for developmental delays for toddler.

Substantiate neglect. Talk with Ms. Taylor about opening case for services. Worker drafted a

safety plan to review with the mom. A Family Team Meeting was scheduled for November 14, and worker will let mom know that case will be transferred to an in-home service worker that will provide support for her and family. Ongoing caseworker can follow up with Mr. Davis to see if he can provide additional support.

11/03/23 (Home visit)

Met with Ms. Taylor at her home. Claire in school. Cara with her aunt Mrs. Wilson. Ms. Taylor continues to make progress on the home. I told her we wanted to open a case to provide services. Reviewed safety plan with Ms. Taylor. She promised to not leave the children alone and to keep the home safe. Informed Ms. Taylor that she would be getting a new worker and talked about the upcoming Family Team Meeting. Ms. Taylor agreed to attend and said she would talk with her sister about coming.

In-Home Services Case Notes

In-Home Supervisor: Neil Campbell

In-Home Social Worker: Kerry Diaz

11/03/23 (Transfer Staffing)

Investigation worker Ben Thomas, investigation supervisor Barb White, in-home worker Kerry Diaz, and in-home supervisor Neil Campbell attending. Reviewed the case for transfer to in-home services. Ben Thomas completed an initial safety assessment with an unsafe result due to lack of appropriate supervision, lack of food, and generally unsafe environment. Risk assessment also completed with moderate risk finding. Safety plan established with mother that documents mom will clean home and supervise the girls. Signed copy in file. Mom made satisfactory efforts to clean the home and expressed her desire for assistance. Safety assessment reflects her efforts. A maternal aunt is willing to provide support for the girls. It is recommended that in-home worker continue to closely monitor the home environment to ensure the children's safety and mother's compliance with safety plan.

Mom denied drug use. Worker is unsure about substance use, and Mom agreed to submit to random UAs. Investigation worker was in touch with dad by phone since he lives in another county. He doesn't visit the girls. He pays rent on family home and used to send mom money to care for girls. Has been unable to send money for several months because of financial situation. Hopes he will be able to resume sending money soon. In the meanwhile, we can assist Mom with applying for TANF and food stamps. Mom does not want dad involved. After some discussion, we decided to see how well Mom does and then reassess how we might involve dad. It might not be necessary since Mom is compliant with safety plan and is asking for assistance. Case assigned to in-home worker and supervisor and will be open for standard six-month period and re-evaluated after that. Investigation worker and in-home worker will conduct joint visit to Mom's home. Will proceed with Family Team Meeting on 11/14/23.

11/06/23 (Home visit)

Investigation worker Ben Thomas and this worker made home visit to Ms. Taylor's home. Ms. Taylor and Cara were at home, and we observed Mom's continuing positive efforts to clean the home environment. I brought a box of food from local food pantry. Claire was at school. Confirmed the date for Family Team Meeting, and Mom stated she plans to attend and bring her sister. I will assist Mom with accessing TANF resources, making an appointment for Cara to be assessed for developmental challenges, appointments for Claire to be seen by dentist, and a referral for parent support services to address household management and parenting. Mom asked when she'd have to go for UA. Asked her to go before end of day.

11/06/23 (Phone)

Called lab to verify that Mom went for UA. UA was negative.

11/07/23 (Home visit)

Made a home visit after school and visited with Claire alone. Claire showed me the bedroom she shares with sister, Cara. The girls share a small bed. Claire stated she helped Mom pick up clothes and toys and they put sheets on the bed. Claire shared that she helps to take care of her sister. Claire stated Mom's friends have not come by in a while. I asked Claire if she felt safe. Claire shrugged her shoulders and said, "I don't know." I told her it was my job to keep her safe so, if she ever didn't feel safe, she should let me know. Claire nodded "yes." Mom told me the school wants to meet with her on 11/9/23. I offered to attend the parent/teacher conference with her and she agreed. Told Mom that she has an appointment for TANF on 11/17/23 and offered transportation if needed and that I will be making arrangements for Parent Support Services to begin as quickly as possible.

11/08/23 (Collateral contact)

I referred Taylor family for Parent Support Services. First visit also scheduled for 11/17/23.

11/09/23 (Collateral contact)

Attended school parent/teacher conference. Mom did not attend. Informed Claire's teacher that the Department was working with the family. Ms. Ashbury, Claire's teacher said that she knew that I was coming because Claire's mom told her when she spoke to her yesterday to confirm today's meeting. Ms. Ashbury said that she was disappointed that Ms. Taylor was not here. She shared concerns about homework, Claire's inability to focus on schoolwork, and the unexcused absences/tardiness. She will be providing a weekly report of Claire's progress to the Mom in an effort to improve Claire's performance. Ms. Ashbury shared that Claire is sharp and just needs structure and support at home, and she hoped the Department could help with that.

11/09/23 (Phone)

Called Mom. She said that she had no one to watch Cara so she couldn't go to the meeting at the school. I told her what was discussed. Mom said that she would be looking for the weekly reports and will make sure Claire gets to school on time.

11/13/23 (Phone)

Ben Thomas, CPS investigator contacted me and said that he received a call from Ms. Harris, the neighbor. She said that things have not changed for the family. Cara was seen playing outside alone again with no adult supervision. Ms. Harris was curious about the status of the case.

11/13/23 (Staffing)

Discussed Ms. Harris's call and concerns with supervisor. Supervisor requested that safety plan be revised to ensure that someone is monitoring the family more closely. Agreed to discuss during FTM on 11/14/23.

11/14/23 (Office visit)

Family Team Meeting held today. Mom, maternal aunt, investigation worker, this worker, and in-home supervisor attended. Reviewed and revised the safety plan. Case plan was developed and signed. Mom agreed to (1) random UAs and substance misuse assessment if positive UAs, (2) follow up on developmental assessment and services for Cara, (3) participate in Parent Support Services for household management and parenting, (4) work with school to improve Claire's school performance and attendance, (5) follow up with TANF, and (6) obtain dental care for Claire.

11/17/23 (Home visit)

Transported Mom and Cara to TANF appointment. Family should begin receiving assistance in the next week. Took Mom to food pantry for groceries and to clothing bank to look for school uniforms (polo shirts, khaki pants) for Claire. Parent support specialist scheduled to come later today.

11/20/23 (Phone)

Called Mom to share that appointment for Cara's developmental assessment will be on 11/22/23, at 9 a.m. Mom stated she can attend but would need help with transportation. Worker asked Mom to go in for UA and Mom agreed. Mom said that the parent support specialist came yesterday, and she thinks that the services will be helpful.

11/22/23 (Home Visit)

Transported Mom and Cara to the developmental assessment today. Results and recommendations to be shared in a few weeks.

12/08/23 (Home visit)

Attempted to make home visit. Mom and Cara not home. Left note asking Mom to call me.

12/08/23 (Phone)

Mom phoned worker to let her know she took Cara to clinic for cough.

12/11/23 (Home visit)

Visited Mom and Cara at home. Mom likes parent support specialist and shared that specialist brought blocks over and showed her how to play with Cara to develop better coordination.

12/12/23 (Phone)

Spoke with parent support specialist to confirm that visits are happening. Specialist shared that Mom appears to be motivated to learn.

12/18/23 (Home visit)

Took mom and Cara to pick up Christmas tree and gifts from Samaritan House. Claire rode bus home and I stayed to help set up tree. Claire says she has lots of homework. She also made a new friend. Claire was wearing school uniform we obtained for her at clothing bank. She was clean and more talkative.

12/19/23 (Phone)

Called Mom to ask her to go in for random UA.

12/20/23 (Phone)

Called for UA results. Learned Mom did not go.

12/23/23 (Home visit)

Delivered turkey and other food to family home. Mom shared that Claire is on holiday break from school until January 8. Last night she let her sleep at her new friend's house.

1/2/24 (Phone)

In-home worker Kerry Diaz on leave through 1/8/24. In-home supervisor, Neil Campbell, called mom to check in. No answer.

1/2/24 (Phone)

Neil Campbell, in-home supervisor, called parent support specialist, Anita Romero, to check in regarding continued progress. Ms. Romero stated Ms. Taylor doing ok. She was not home last week for scheduled appointment. She will follow up with her this week.

1/3/24 (Home visit)

Neil Campbell, in-home supervisor, made home visit. Ms. Taylor and the two girls were home. Maternal aunt, Doris Wilson, came to visit while supervisor was there. The home was warm but messy. Family had good holiday and father, Adam Davis, sent gift cards in the mail to the girls. Ms. Taylor has a follow-up appointment next week to review Cara's developmental assessment results and recommendations. Claire is off school until next week and has been helping mom with Cara. Ms. Taylor will go do UA before end of day.

1/8/24 Phone)

Neil Campbell, in-home supervisor, called for UA results. Ms. Taylor did not go for UA.

1/8/24 (Phone)

Neil Campbell, in-home supervisor, called school counselor. School counselor said that Claire's teacher reported that Claire was supposed to have done a book report during the holiday break and it was not done. The book report was mentioned on the weekly report that the teacher has been sending home to the mother.

1/9/24 (Phone)

Neil Campbell, in-home supervisor, called Ms. Taylor. Asked about book report. Ms. Taylor said

she forgot. She has to re-schedule appointment to get Cara's results and recommendations as she couldn't make the first appointment. Asked Ms. Taylor about the UA. She said that she got wrapped up in the holidays and it slipped her mind. Asked Ms. Taylor to go for an UA today.

1/9/24 (Supervisory Staffing)

Staffed case following supervisor's visit during worker absence. Mom missed a random UA and was asked again to take one. Supervisor observed home to be in disarray but not unsafe. Parent support specialist unable to make last visit because Mom was not home. Worker shared that school expressed concern about Mom's lack of support to child to ensure that schoolwork was complete and missed follow-up appointment for Cara.

Worker to complete risk and safety re-assessments and to schedule substance use assessment for mom.

1/12/24 (Phone)

Mom called to share that appointment for Cara's screening results will be on 1/17/24. Mom said I could attend. Mom has not gone for a UA. I asked mom to go for UA.

1/16/24 (Phone)

Mom's UA results were clean.

1/17/24 (Office visit)

Met Mom at appointment to learn of developmental assessment results. Cara is delayed in small and large motor development and verbal skills. Cara is not speaking in 2-word phrases and utters only a few clear words (e.g., mama, juice). She is not walking steadily and holds on to furniture or crawls. Recommending physical and speech therapy and ongoing assessment. Therapy to begin as soon as possible.

2/2/24 (Home visit)

Only Mom home. Mom said Cara went to the store with her aunt. I asked Mom about her continued contact with the school. Claire's most recent progress report indicated a decline in completion of homework resulting in a drop in all grades. Mom expressed her stress in keeping up with documentation to keep TANF going. She's tried a couple of times to get ahold of the counselor but hasn't been able to connect. Parent support specialist is scheduled to be at the home tomorrow. Mom said that she hasn't been able to schedule Cara's therapy.

2/2/24 (Phone)

Called Mom's sister Doris. Confirmed that Cara was with her earlier today. She said that she tries to take Cara a few times a week so her sister can do what she needs to do. She said she will help mom set up therapy appointments for Cara.

2/14/24 (Phone)

Parent support specialist called worker and left a message indicating she was at the home on 2/13/24 and had some concerns. Specialist is concerned about home management and supervision of children.

2/16/24 (Phone)

Worker called Mom and asked her to complete a UA.

3/5/24 (Home visit)

Mom and Cara at home. Cara looked like she hadn't bathed in a day or two. Her hair was matted and generally dirty. Mom expressed frustration with trying to keep up with all the things she had to do.

Parent support specialist gave her some recipes to try and helped her pick up the house a little. Claire brought a note home asking for Mom to stop by to review her work. I asked Mom how often she has spent time with parent support specialist. Mom stated she's missed a few times

because of needing to take care of TANF things and stuff for the girls.

4/1/24 (Phone)

Parent support specialist called to share that she'd like to schedule a meeting to discuss progress and next steps. She'd like Mom to be a part of the discussion. Meeting scheduled for 4/16/24.

4/2/24 (Phone)

Mom will go in for UA today. Worker asked Mom to complete a substance use assessment. Mom shared that she is trying her best.

4/3/24 (Phone)

UA result: Negative

4/4/24 (Supervisory Staffing)

Reviewed case. Case has been open for about six months. Worker to complete safety and risk re-assessments and make recommendation for extension or case closure.

4/16/24 (Office visit)

Meeting with Mom and parent support specialist.

4/22/24 (Home visit)

Met with Mom in the home. Parent support specialist has been to the home since we last met.

5/6/24 (Phone)

Parent support program called to share that they've completed the time-limited intervention with Ms. Taylor. If services are to continue, they will need an updated referral. Specialist recommending ongoing services.

5/8/24 (Home visit)

Mom, aunt, Claire, and Cara were there. Worker reviewed parent support program intervention with Mom. TANF continues. Home was satisfactory. Claire was working on some schoolwork. Asked Claire how things were going and she said "okay." Aunt said that the family could handle things from now on and would make sure everything was good for the girls.

5/21/24 (Supervisory Staffing)

Reviewed completed risk and safety assessments. Recommended that the case be closed. Supervisor approved. Will notify family that the case will be closed.

5/23/24 (Phone)

Called Mom. Let her know that Department was closing her case.