

# Practice Points to Ponder!

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Department of Children and Families and  
University of South Florida Training Consortium

## Knock, knock...who's there?

The Family Functioning Assessment (FFA) is the professional assessment of a family. The documentation process begins with allegations reported to the Hotline, outlining concerns for children in a particular home. As child welfare professionals, it is our responsibility to assess each Hotline report, begin pre-commencement activities, and develop a plan for information collection. All allegations reported are summarized within the first section of the FFA, as a reminder to the reader of how and why DCF is involved with the family. This *summary* provides the reader with context for the information that follows within the FFA, without repeating the allegations word for word. Summarizing means we capture the important points of why we are being called to the family's home. Some examples are below:

**Allegation Narrative (From Hotline):** "There are concerns mom is using methamphetamines. Mom has been trying to get a hold of meth for use. It is believed mom is using. It is believed mom has been using meth since she got out of a program 2 months ago; mom completed the program. Mom has a history of using meth. In the past, mom has admitted to using. Mom tested positive for meth during pregnancy. Mom went to jail in 2013 for meth. Mom has been using since 2010. The father also cooks and uses meth and is sometimes a caregiver for the child."

☞ **Summary of Allegations (in FFA):** A report was received alleging that the mother is using methamphetamines (meth) and has previously been incarcerated and admitted to an in-patient facility due to drug use. The mother used meth during her pregnancy. The father is alleged to be involved in cooking and selling meth when he sometimes cares for his child.

**Allegation Narrative (From Hotline):** "The child was playing outside in the parking lot unattended and was found by relatives and brought into their home. The child now has welts and bruises that are large, red and purple. There are several markings as if the child was struck repeatedly. Mom was not aware of the bruises. The other children in the home are age appropriate and both parents work outside the home." Additional report: "It is believed the mother and father got into a verbal argument about the child being unattended. The mother hit the father in the face and was arrested for domestic violence."

☞ **Summary of Allegations (in FFA):** A report was received alleging the child was playing outside, unattended, and wandered away from his home. After being found by relatives and brought to their home, the child was observed to have large bruises, red and purple in color. The mother was not aware of how the child sustained bruises and did not realize he had wandered away from home. An additional report was received on 01/10/15 alleging the parents got into a verbal altercation that turned physical. The mother was arrested for hitting the father and a no contact order was put in place between the parents.

**Stay tuned for next month's Practice Points to Ponder---Pam Aepfel & Shawna Thomas**  
*Collaborating to support and sustain our new practice model.*

