

KINDRED SUPPORT SERVICES, LLC
Intensive Family Services
INITIAL ASSESSMENT

FAMILY: Sally Crist

DATE: 1-7-05

CHILD: Ned Dawson

INITIAL SESSION: 12-14-04

DHS CASEWORKER: Linda MacIntyre

REFERRAL INFORMATION: DHS referred this family for voluntary services in order to access counseling support for Sally and her two sons, Ned, 7, and Cayden, 5, after a domestic violence incident with Sally's partner, Dan Dawson. The children were reportedly exposed to domestic violence in the home. There are concerns about Ned acting out anger through violence and swearing. Sally is participating in individual treatment with Dr. Ida Pacheco. Sally has a restraining order preventing her from contact with Dan. The children have regular contact with Dan who provides child care for them at his parent's home where he is living. The referral describes Sally as cooperative and motivated and a good Mom. She has reportedly taken parenting classes, is currently enrolled in classes, and has a job.

FAMILY ASSESSMENT: Cayden and Ned volunteered the information that counseling might be helpful in order to talk about "when Daddy threw a fit at Mommy." The children observed their father being handcuffed by the police and removed from the home. This experience was very disturbing to them as was their mother's emotional reaction. Both boys indicate that they enjoy their visitation time with Dan. Their behavior problems have somewhat decreased since our initial session. Sally described the circumstances around the domestic violence that has occurred in their home. She stated that there have been three incidents in the 8 ½ years since she has been in relationship with Dan. Each incident has occurred when they were drinking alcohol. The current situation occurred amid a great deal of family stress which occurred following her mother's violent suicide attempt in Oct. 2004 and her 20 year old sister's subsequent move into their home. Alcohol use is sporadic and tends toward occasional bingeing rather than frequent or constant use.

Sally describes herself as socially isolated with no close friends locally. She said she and Dan's difficulties began when they moved here and she feels it is due to the lack of social opportunities. Sally said their social life has been limited to hanging out in bars and acknowledges the risks entailed. Since family stresses have increased, communication between Sally and Dan have broken down and she feels this has contributed to Dan's out of control behavior. They have not participated in counseling together other than one session which she felt was unhelpful. Sarah also thinks that her unresolved problems with her mother have contributed to stress between her and Dan.

Sally's is hopeful that their family will be reunited. She describes Dan as a good father who is thoughtful, giving and loyal toward her. She acknowledges that the violence has become increasingly serious in each event. Sally is opposed to Dan's participation in Domestic Violence Treatment through For Mankind as she believes the program prohibits contact between clients and their families for six months. Sally believes that her children would suffer from having contact with their father abruptly halted. Sally's description of the incident indicates that Dan's behavior has escalated to a

dangerous level as he repeatedly threw her at a table hitting her head and body. Sally minimizes the violence. From our discussion, I suspect that Sally's attitude may be in part a reaction to fear of losing her family by having to choose between her husband and her children.

FAMILY STRENGTHS: Sally describes herself and Dan as devoted to their children and committed to their family. She is driven by wanting to make things better for her children. Sally interacts with sensitivity and humor with Ned and Cayden. She wants to increase structure for their home and family in ways that strengthen family relationships. Cayden and Ned both appear somewhat comfortable discussing the violence that occurred in front of their mother and, according to Sally, have asked to come back to counseling.

TREATMENT PLAN:

GOAL 1: Traumatic effects of the domestic violence and disruption they have experienced will be reduced or eliminated for Ned and Cayden.

- a. Sally and her children will develop a shared view of the violence they have experienced in their home.
- b. Sally and her children will learn how to talk about feelings related to the behaviors and situations they have experienced.
- c. Children will increase their abilities to deal with anger and frustration in ways that don't hurt others.
- d. Sally will increase her sense of personal authority with her children.

GOAL 2: Sally will protect her family from exposure to domestic violence.

- a. Family members will identify safety rights and responsibilities for all family members.
- b. Family members will develop a safety plan for the future.
- c. Family members will increase their understanding of abusive vs healthy communication and behaviors.
- d. Sally will increase her understanding of the short and long term effects of domestic violence on children.

MODALITY: I will meet weekly with Sally and the boys individually and together in order to address the above issues comprehensively. Sally has signed a Release of Information so that I can coordinate treatment with Dr. Ida Pacheco.

RECOMMENDATIONS: In the event that Dan participates in Domestic Violence treatment, I recommend that Ned and Cayden be provided with one hour bi-monthly professionally supervised visitations with their father in order to provide reassurance to the children if he is determined by the treatment program to be able to interact appropriately. It is essential that visits are characterized by quality, child-oriented activity and that both parents are able and willing to interact in ways that provide reassurance and comfort to the children. Both parents may benefit from assessments to determine whether alcohol treatment is recommended.

Julie Farnam, LCSW