

Read the synopsis of the investigation. Complete the **SDM Risk Assessment tool** using this information.

### THE BORDER FAMILY

**REFERRAL INFORMATION:** Father transported the children, Susie and Steven, to the hospital. Father explained to the hospital social FSS (Jane Miller) that he just "lost it" this afternoon when he got home from work and learned that Susie came home with a note from her teacher. Father stated to Jane Miller that he was speaking with Susie and she wasn't listening and it "pissed him off". He grabbed her and shoved her against the wall on the steps and her head hit the stair railing.

Jane Miller states that Susie has sustained a head trauma and a CT scan and a MRI are being run to determine the seriousness of the injury. Jane Miller states that when Susie came into the ER she was listless and had difficulty breathing. She also reports three to four red marks on Susie's left arm.

Steven appears to have a red mark on the left side of his cheek that is swollen and is starting to bruise. It appears to be in the shape of a hand. Steven told Jane Miller that he screamed at his father to leave Susie alone and his father slapped him on the face. The mark on Steven's cheek is slightly swollen but Steven states it does not hurt. No treatment has been given at this time.

Father stated he was "pissed that Susie was not paying attention to him." Steven stated that his father does not like it when the children are disrespectful, but Steven also stated that it doesn't matter how hard he and Susie try to please him, he still gets mad at them.

Steven told Jane Miller that his father has hit them before, but never caused anything "really bad." Steven stated he does not know where his mother is. She frequently leaves for several days at a time. Steven appears to be somewhat fearful of his father. The hospital social FSS and other staff are concerned for the children's safety if they were to be left alone with their father.

## **INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION:**

**INTERVIEW WITH SUSIE AND STEVEN:** Susie was initially interviewed in the hospital by this Family Services Specialist (FSS) and a police detective. She verified the story that her father and Steven told the hospital social FSS. Susie indicated that her father often used physical punishment when she was 'bad'. She sometimes has marks from being hit with a switch. FSS observed Susie had three distinct oval bluish marks on her left upper arm. The oval marks had red coloring around the perimeter of the bruise. FSS observed that Susie was a petite girl who did not appear to be over fifty pounds in weight. Susie wears glasses.

Steven was also interviewed separately. FSS asked Steven who lived in the family's home. Steven stated that his parents, Susie and he lived in the home. His grandparents used to live with them but have recently moved out. FSS asked Steven to describe his home environment. Steven said they live in a small house that was cramped when his grandparents lived there but now has a lot more space. When asked if there was anything he would change about his house, he stated they have a lot of roaches and sometimes he has accidentally taken them in his bookbag to school, which he described as embarrassing. FSS asked Steven what happened to him and if he knew how his little sister was injured. Steven said that, frequently, Susie brings notes home from school, not always bad letters, but sometimes notes about school events. Steven said that "my father can't read" so his mom has to read them to his dad. On this date, since his mom was gone, Steven read the note from Susie's teacher, Mrs. Holliday, to his dad. The note said that Susie didn't want to lie down at naptime and lost her recess privilege. Steven said his father got angry and started yelling at Susie about her behavior in school. Susie wasn't listening to him. Steven said that his father grabbed Susie and tried to make her sit on the steps. Steven said his dad was really angry because Susie wasn't listening. Steven said that his father gets really angry when they don't do well in school. Steven said that when he was reading the note to his father, Susie wasn't looking at their father. His father grabbed Susie's arm and tried to make her sit down and listen and she hit her head. The next thing Steven remembers was his sister lying on the floor not moving or talking. Steven said his father just picked Susie up and told Steven to get in the car. They drove straight to the hospital. FSS asked Steven about the mark on his face. Steven hesitated but then stated that

when his father grabbed Susie, Steven yelled at his father to “leave her alone.” His father turned and hit Steven on the face with his hand and told Steven to “stay out of it.”

#### **INTERVIEW WITH MR. BORDER:**

FSS stated to Mr. Border that she had spoken with Susie, Steven, and Dr. Gray prior to speaking with him. Mr. Border immediately began to explain the incident with his daughter. He stated to the FSS that he had come home from a long day of work and was tired. FSS asked where he was employed, and he said that he worked with his wife’s father at his home repair shop. He said today he got home around 4:00 PM. He stated that when he gets home his wife will read him any notes from Susie’s teacher. His wife was not home today so Steven began to read the note stating that Susie was disobedient to the teacher and had to miss recess. Mr. Border stated to FSS that he was “really upset.” He said “I didn’t raise her to disrespect her teacher.” He went on to say that he stresses success in school to his kids stating, “I just want them to do better than I did.” He stated that he was trying to talk to Susie about her misbehavior and why it was so important to do well in school. Susie wasn’t listening to him and it “pissed him off that she wasn’t listening.” He grabbed her to put her in time out on the stairs and when he did, she hit her head on the stairs. Mr. Border admitted to smacking Steven in the face. Mr. Border shared with the FSS that he had been abused as a child and did not want his children to resent him like he resented his own parents.

Mr. Border said he had no idea where his wife was. She often disappears for a few days. When asked about the use of drugs or alcohol, Mr. Border says he drinks sometimes. He got a DUI last year so he tries to be careful to not drink and drive. His wife, Pamela has used meth from time to time but he doesn’t think she is using now.

FSS asked where his wife’s parents lived. Mr. Border stated that his in-laws, Jim and Betty Blanton, live in the city. He gave their phone number and address to the FSS. FSS asked permission to contact them as a possible temporary placement for the children.

FSS also stated that she would need to make a home visit on the next day at 4:15 PM to observe where the incident occurred and further discuss the safety of the children. Mr. Border agreed to meet the FSS at that time.

**COLLATERAL INTERVIEWS:** FSS spoke with Dr. Gray directly to access the hospital results of the MRI and CT scan for the records. The Dr. stated that a small subdural hematoma was found on the posterior lobe of her brain.

The grandparents also agreed that Steven could stay with them tonight and that Susie could come when she was released from the hospital.

**HOME VISIT:**

FSS went to the home of the Border family. Mr. Border granted permission for the FSS to enter the home. He still had not heard from his wife. He admitted that she was probably somewhere using meth. He stated that he didn't mean to hurt either of them. He told the FSS that he would do what he needed to do so the kids could live at home. He said he was grateful that Jim and Betty Blanton have taken Susie and Steven to their home, so that they didn't have to go to a foster home "until this is all over." FSS observed the stairs where Susie hit her head. FSS observed that the stairs did not have any carpeting and the edges were very sharp. It seemed to be a standard staircase. Mr. Border showed FSS how he shoved Susie down by her arm. He also showed FSS where he and Steven were standing when Steven was hit. She observed that house was untidy but housekeeping was adequate. FSS also observed a number of crawling roaches on the floor and walls. Mr. Border said he knew the bugs were getting out of hand but did not have the money to hire an exterminator.

Mrs. Border was not located during the investigation.