Case Study


Sarah tells you that she is being investigated by a Child Protective Services caseworker for potential child neglect as you start a regular counseling session with her. She said a neighbor has reported to Child Protective Services that he saw Daniel, her 4-year old boy, cowering near the garden shed in his pajamas late one winter night. During your conversation Sarah said, “I sent my boy outside to keep him safe during a violent fight with my husband, Dan.” During your conversation with her, she also told you that she has been avoiding her neighbor since then. In the past few visits, you also have seen a bruise on Sarah’s arm and she has been complaining about a recurring headache.

- Do you have any negative feelings about Sarah that might affect your interactions with her?

- If so, what are some of those feelings?

- What could you do to address your emotional responses so they do not interfere with your service delivery to Sarah?

- How could you express support and concern to Sarah?

- Keeping in mind that the problems facing women experiencing violence are not limited to the violence itself, describe some of the other problems Sarah is experiencing.

- Are there any ways that violence might have caused or made the problems Sarah is experiencing?

- Can you identify anything Sarah is doing to keep herself and her child safe?