

Motivational Interviewing Case Scenarios: Scenario 4 of 4

(Note: A narrated PowerPoint accompanies this handout.)



Scenario 4: The CPI goes to a home to investigate a hotline report of “strange people coming in and out of the home at all hours and frequent sounds of a young girl and baby crying” in a home with a single mother, an infant, and a pre-teen daughter. When the CPI meets the parent for the first time, she notices that the house is very sparsely furnished; with no electronics, and no furniture (except for a couple folding lawn chairs). There is a lot of trash in the house, and a sink full of dirty dishes. The infant is in a back room alone playing in his crib with the door closed and has a very wet and messy diaper. This conversation and associated MI dialogue assumes the following:

- The parent denies having people in and out of the home, and says someone must be trying to start trouble.

MI Script:

CPI: Hello Ms. Adams, my name is Sue Holt - I would like to talk to you today if that is okay with you.

PARENT: What’s this all about?

CPI: I’m from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and I’ve been asked to follow up on a call received about possible safety risks in your home. I imagine you have some questions.

PARENT: Yeah. What’s going on anyway?

CPI: Thanks for talking with me about this. The report states a concern about a high level of traffic coming and going from the house. Please fill me in.

PARENT: I'll fill you in - I have some nosy neighbors – we have some friends coming around – no more than anyone else on this block. There is no problem in having friends, I should hope!

CPI: I need to complete a quick walk through and check on safety. Would it be okay if we sit and talk when I'm finished? I would like to keep this as open as possible.

PARENT: Go ahead if you have to.

CPI: This won't take too long.

PARENT: Okay - I have to get ready to go somewhere pretty quick.

Doorbell rings - voice from the open screen door - Chandra? It's Derrick... you home?

CPI: I will wait for you to get that before I start.

PARENT: No need...that is my boyfriend's brother – he's just here to pick up something.

(Note: The CPI completes the tour.)

CPI: Ms. Adams, where can we sit to review the results?

PARENT: All we have are these lawn chairs.

CPI: That's fine. There are some concerns that I have observed. How would you like to go about this?

PARENT: Let's hear it.

CPI: It's important to let you know we will put together a plan to address the concerns. How does that sit with you?

PARENT: Fine - cause there's nothing wrong here except nosy neighbors.

CPI: You are confident that everything here is safe for your children. I would like to review the assessment if that is okay, and I want to be accurate so that you clearly understand what safety concerns I have observed.

PARENT: Oh please...

CPI: I'm going to ask for you to hang with me on this. There are some things that will need your attention. Safety concerns are serious, and I would like your permission to go over the issues and come up with a way to move forward. Thoughts?

PARENT: If you must...I have a hard time getting past who called me in.

CPI: It feels like you are in the spotlight. I can see where you are at on that and it's normal to have that reaction.

PARENT: Hope so...

CPI: Ok to move ahead? (Nod Yes - from parent) Thanks...so here is what I need to let you know. I will start with not much furniture, no bed for your older daughter, no crib for the baby. I am only seeing the barest of essentials, no television, or electronics; your baby needs attention for a diaper change. In addition, the trash that is all around is a safety concern as is the sink full of dirty dishes.

PARENT: (Defensively) I can't afford much more, and I have only been here 2 months. The baby is fine - I will take care of that diaper as soon as you leave. What do you expect?

CPI: I would like to propose a couple of things to get the situation resolved. Would that be something you are interested in?

PARENT: If it will get you out of my hair.

CPI: This is not pleasant for you. I hope we can work together to resolve this and avoid continuing problems. Here is what I am going to propose - that we put together a plan to get things straightened up in the house for safety and to make sure your baby is getting consistent care. The plan would include some follow up visits. When the situation improves, we can discuss any additional ways to handle this. What this means is that I will open a case file and I would like to be able to close this out within 6 weeks. How does that work for you?

PARENT: It's not something I really agree with.

CPI: You are not interested in working on this, even though this may put you at risk for possible court involvement.

PARENT: Who said anything about the court? What the hell is this, anyway?

CPI: You are surprised by all of this. Ms. Adams, a report that results in the concerns I have observed is serious and I am bound to assess safety and to assist you to decide on a plan of correction. That is for you to decide. Unless we can agree on a plan to move it forward

satisfactorily this could become a situation where the court intervenes. What are you thinking right now?

PARENT: That this is BS.

Note: At this point, Chandra's 13-year-old daughter comes in the front door, realizes her television is gone, and starts crying while demanding to know why her mom keeps selling things. Then she runs from the house.

CPI: Ms. Adams, I will need to follow up with your daughter. What else can you tell me?

PARENT: She's just mad that I sold her tv to pay rent.

CPI: She's upset about losing things that were important to her and perhaps worrying what else might be next.

PARENT: Yeah but I gotta keep a roof over my head. If I didn't do that you would be on my case for that too. I can't win.

CPI: It seems like no matter what you do you can't win.

CPI: I am showing here that you are receiving automatic child support and economic assistance that would be sufficient to cover your rent and basic needs. What can you tell me about that?

PARENT: I don't know. Things are expensive.

CPI: You have a lot going on right now. I want to resolve this, and I want to be straight with you. There is more going on than it looks like on the surface.

PARENT: (Begins to cry) I might as well tell you. My daughter will anyway. I was in a car accident a few years ago and my doctor put me on pain meds. When she suddenly cut me off 6 months ago, I got dope sick real bad.

CPI: I'm so sorry. Tell me more. I think I can help.



Individual or Staff Meeting Exercise

With this case study in mind, individually or as a group, continue to “walk-through” a process that might continue where this one temporarily left off. Consider including how to use MI processes and skills to talk through the following:

- Discrepancies between the background and collateral information gathered/reviewed by the CPI and the parent’s account of the situation, if any.
- How to introduce the potential need for a parent to get a SUD assessment and overdose prevention education/support.
- Options for ensuring child safety while the parent(s) is in the assessment process and treatment.

The correct answers are provided in the narrated PowerPoint that accompanies this handout.

