

## Kara's Preparation

To plan a purposeful visit, Kara considers the specific issues that affect the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and youth in this family. Before each visit and supervisory meeting, she reviews:

- Case history
- Genogram
- Case plans and action plans
- Documentation from previous contacts
- Collateral contact documentation
- Recently completed assessments and evaluations with recommendations
- Supervisor staffing notes

Using this information, she writes notes and creates a short agenda for the visit to bring as a guide.

## Case History

### Household Composition

Name	Relation	Age
Melanie Montoya	Biological mother	33
Tony Montoya	Biological father	35
Taylor Montoya	Daughter	16
Ryan Montoya	Son	9
Bobby Neal	Melanie's stepbrother	19

### History

This family has four previous unsubstantiated reports of child abuse. Police have responded to numerous domestic violence calls. Mr. Montoya has three prior domestic violence charges.

### Incident Report

Parents with a history of domestic violence and alcohol abuse engaged in a physical dispute with their two children, ages 9 and 16, present. The argument began on Saturday evening after both parents had been drinking during the day. The argument escalated from yelling and name calling into a physical altercation. The children came home in the middle of the fight and went straight to their rooms. At some point, Ryan, age 9, entered the kitchen to try to calm down his parents and was hit in the head by a plate thrown by the mother, intending to hit the father. The wound was deep and began to bleed uncontrollably. Taylor, age 16, did not witness the incident. When she heard the commotion, she ran out of her room and saw her brother on the floor with blood gushing from his head. Taylor became angry and started to yell at her mother for harming her brother. Taylor charged her mother out of anger and began to hit her. This infuriated the father, and he yanked Taylor off his wife and punched Taylor in the face, causing a bloody nose and immediate bruises to her eye and face. After the father punched Taylor, she grabbed her brother, and they ran to a neighbor's house. While at the neighbor's house, Taylor attempted to stop her brother's bleeding. When this did not work, Taylor rushed him to the hospital, where he required 18 stitches. The injuries observed on both children prompted medical personnel to report the situation to child welfare. A caseworker, along with law enforcement officials, responded to the hospital. Mr. Montoya was charged with domestic violence and child abuse. Law enforcement officials took him into custody due to the new charges, as well as for probation violation. This triggered Mrs. Montoya to become angry, fearful, and suicidal. After

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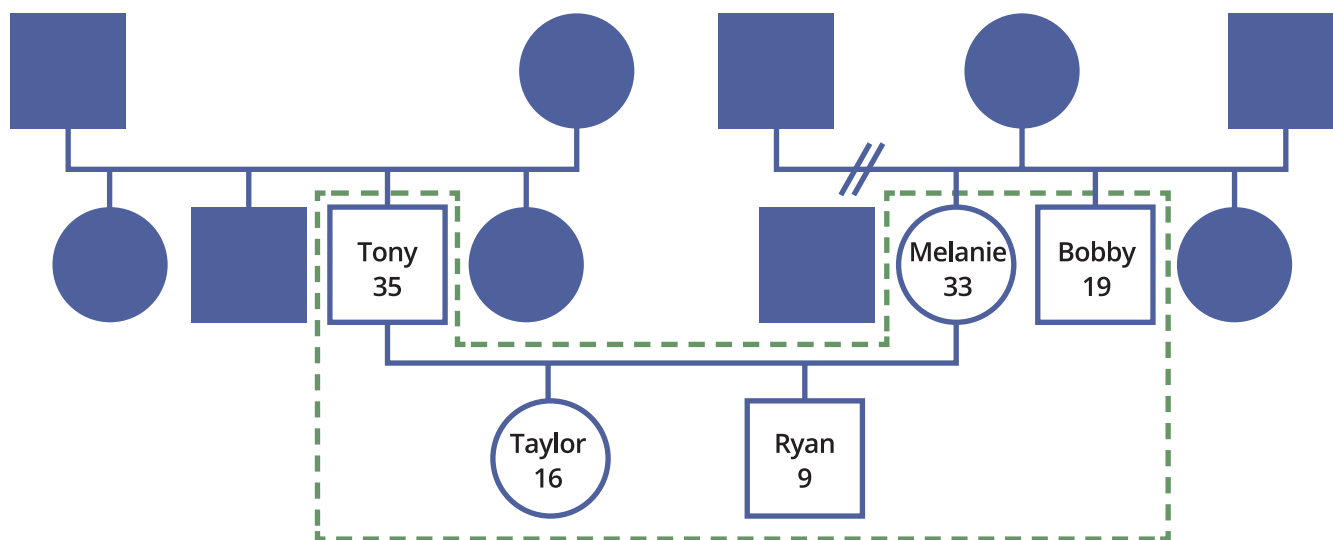
assessing Mrs. Montoya's mental health, health-care personnel determined she met criteria for a mental health hold. Both parents were asked about relatives who could take in the children temporarily. Mrs. Montoya stated that her stepbrother, Bobby, age 19, has been staying at their house for several months and would be willing to take the children; however, it was determined that he is a registered sex offender. Bobby has no money and nowhere else to go, and the family is not willing to make him move, as they think he will wind up on the street. Both Mr. and Mrs. Montoya's extended families live in another state, and they are not able to provide any other kinship options. The children were placed with a resource parent due to lack of kinship option.

## Kara's Notes

Kara makes notes about areas to explore with the family. The history does not give her insight into the parents' protective factors and the family strengths, which she knows will play an essential role for the changes this family will have to make to create a safe environment for the children. Reading the incident report and case history, she notices the pattern of domestic violence in the family, the ties to alcohol use, and the fact that this is the first reported incident in which the children were present and injured during a fight between the parents. She uses the information from the case record to begin to draw a genogram of the family.

## Montoya Family Genogram

A genogram, like a family tree, is a picture representing relationships in a family. Using a genogram serves as a great way to empower and engage family members and allows them to see their behavior as it relates to the whole family system and historical patterns of behavior.



Kara is able to draw this basic genogram from the documentation of the family's involvement with her agency. She writes family members' ages under their names and circles the people living in the Montoya household at the time of the incident: Tony, Melanie, their daughter, Taylor, their son, Ryan, and Melanie's stepbrother, Bobby. Melanie's parents are divorced, and her mother remarried. Melanie has one older brother and two younger stepsiblings. Tony's parents are married, and he has an older sister and brother and one younger sister. Kara wonders if other living options might be available for Bobby and if any family member can offer positive support as the family works through this crisis. She will use the genogram to talk with the Montoyas about the relationships between family members, explore who might serve as a resource for them, and understand the history of behavioral patterns.

## Kara's Agenda Framework

To keep each visit purposeful and solution focused, Kara writes a new agenda before each visit to use as a guide. During the visit, she listens and adjusts the agenda to respond to the naturally occurring conversation and new information. She makes note of helpful questions to use and builds the agenda from the basic elements that appear below.

### Agenda

- Introductions, engagement, and purpose of visit
- Assessment of:
  - Safety
  - Risk
  - Permanency (maintaining connections, stability of current situation)
  - Well-being (health, mental health, development, behavior, education, social activities, and relationships)
  - Adjustment to the placement
  - Progress on case plans and action plans
- Plan for creating safety for the children:
  - Identification of behaviors that need to change to create a safe environment for the children
  - Identification of family strengths to support changes (emotional, mental, and behavioral strengths; positive experiences with similar situations; work; stable housing; resources; network of friends; and family)
  - Exploration of formal and informal resources to support needs
- Follow up:
  - Action items from last visit (What worked? What didn't happen?)
- Current needs
- Summary and next steps

Kara brings her agenda, notes, family genogram, current case plans and action plans, and any necessary forms or referrals to the visit.