



# Practice Points

## **The Importance of Reviewing Prior History**

The purpose of this practice point is to remind Children’s Service Workers of the importance of reviewing the case history, prior to the initial contact of that worker with a family. The practice of reviewing a family’s case history is to be completed at the opening of each family’s case, as well as when a case is transferred to a new worker.

Thorough review of prior involvement between CD and the family can be useful in assessing chronic problems as well as strengths within the family. The Children’s Service Worker should consider the family’s prior involvement with CD throughout the screening review, assessment/Investigation process, conclusion determination and treatment planning process. It is imperative that when a worker transfers a case to another worker, be it a CA/N Hotline, Alternative Care case or a Family Centered Service case, that all efforts are made for the new worker to review that family’s and /or child’s case history prior to his/her contact with the family.

The implications of a family’s history in CPS practice should be utilized in a manner consistent with the “rolling icebergs” theory by Tony Loman, of the Institute of Applied Research. Incident reports should be seen in the context of other problems that manifest themselves within a family in different ways at different points in time. One specific incident may only be the “tip of the iceberg”, while other (sometimes more serious) things might be hidden below the surface. Repeated reports on families, then, may best be understood as rolling icebergs, with different aspects revealing themselves and being observed across time. Understanding how to recognize and utilize prior history in this manner will provide a solid foundation for intervention by the Children’s Service Worker.

Supervisors must assure that staff has made every effort to search for prior CD involvement, and that the information is given appropriate consideration.

Information regarding prior history review as well as the accumulation of harm to children due to chronic neglect can be found in Child Welfare Manual: [Section 2, Chapter 3.2.1](#) and [Section 2, Chapter 5.3.1](#). Information pertaining to reviewing the family's and/or child's prior history when a family's case is transferred to a new worker can be found in Child Welfare Manual [Section 3, Chapter 9.1.3](#), [Section 4, Chapter 8.3](#), and [Section 5, Chapter 3.9](#).

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