

Helping Systems Classify Maltreatment

Amy M. Smith Slep



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

A private university in the public service

Presentation to the Child Maltreatment Solutions Network Conference
September 27, 2017
State College, PA

Acknowledgements

- Work is joint effort with Richard Heyman
- Partnership
 - U.S. Air Force Family Advocacy Program
 - World Health Organization
- Funding
 - US Air Force/USDA
 - Fetzer Institute

Overview of Presentation

- Child and partner maltreatment operationalized criteria for USAF
 - Background and rationale
 - Development of criteria
 - Field tests of criteria
- Dissemination
- Samples
- Recommendations

What is Maltreatment?

- No consensus in field
- Uniform definitions a step in the right direction
- Does not translate down to review teams or field workers trying to decide a single incident

Problems with Inconsistent Determinations

- Communication
 - People think they are discussing same thing but really are not
- Information
 - If criteria not reliable, questionable to compare data across time or place
- Prevention
 - Disagreement over what constitutes maltreatment hampers public education and prevention
- Action
 - Process/decisions are inherently unjust unless decisions are consistent

Goal

- Consistent decisions across workers, locations, states, and time
 - Data are reliable
 - Families are treated fairly

Studies with the US Air Force

- Evaluated reliability and validity of current definitions
- Reviewed all existing published definitions of CAN
- Developed the simplest operationalizations possible to support consistent decision making
- Conducted two field trials, second with a computerized decision tree tool
- Conducted a dissemination trial

Results

- Field trials were essential
 - Even minute changes in wording can have unintended affects
- First field trial (definitions only) showed marked improvement in reliability
- Second field trial (definitions, structured assessment, computerized decision tool, decisions made criterion by criterion, structured training) resulted in excellent (> 90%) reliability
- Dissemination trial showed > 90% reliability when widely implemented
- Dissemination also resulted in prevention effects

Where are these criteria being adopted?

- US Department of Defense – all services
- Child Welfare
 - Alaska Child Welfare system
- Healthcare
 - Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (5th Edition), American Psychiatric Association
 - International Classification of Disease (11th Edition), World Health Organization

Lessons about Implementation

- Implementation **MUST** be done carefully and with some consultation
- Wording changes cause challenges
- Must fit with rest of system
- Links with assessment and records facilitate good implementation

Lessons about Implementation

- Structured, interactive training critical
 - Can be brief and web-based
- Computerized tree is helpful, but not essential
 - Requires more training, closer supervision
- Quality assurance systems are critical

Conclusions

- One can reliably determine if an incident is above or below a threshold
- Best decisions involve
 - Computerized decision tool
 - Standardized assessment information
 - Y/N on criteria, not overall
 - Brief required training (web-based OK)
- Efficient
- Prevention effect: When used in child welfare setting, cut recidivism in half

Definition Structure

- Each type of maltreatment includes
 - Act or omission
 - Impact
 - Exclusion
- Decision tree presents each criterion for consideration, stops or skips dependent on previous choices

Decision Tree: Child Physical (Act)

INFOCON 3 UNCLASSIFIED INFOCON Alpha

Determination Voting Process



Incident Information

Incident Number: 2 Offender Gender: Male Victim Type: Child Victim Gender: Male

Child Physical Abuse - Criterion A1

Non-accidental use of physical force on the part of a child's caregiver.

Physical force includes, but is not limited to, hitting with the open hand or slapping, including spanking ; dropping; pushing or shoving; grabbing or yanking limbs or body; poking; hair-pulling; scratching; pinching; restraining or squeezing; shaking; throwing; biting; kicking; hitting with fist; hitting with a stick, strap, belt, electrical cord, or other object; scalding or burning; poisoning; stabbing; applying force to throat; strangling or cutting off air supply; holding under water; brandishing or using a weapon.

Board Members Vote Meets Criterion Does NOT Meet Criterion



Child Physical Abuse: Impact

The screenshot displays the FASOR CRB Decision Tree web application. At the top left is the logo for FASOR (Federal Air Support Operations Reporting) with the text "CRB Decision Tree". To the right of the logo is an image of two fighter jets flying in a blue sky. Below the header is a section titled "Incident Information" with the following details: Incident Number: 2, Offender Gender: Male, Victim Type: Child, and Victim Gender: Male. The main content area is titled "Child Physical Abuse - Criterion B1" and contains the text "Act(s) caused more than inconsequential physical injury." At the bottom of the main content area, there is a "Board Members Vote" section with two dropdown menus: "Meets Criterion" and "Does NOT Meet Criterion", both currently showing a count of 0. Below the vote section are buttons for "Start Over", "Defer", "View Previous Vote", and "Submit". The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray showing the time as 10:58 AM on 8/11/2014.

Child Physical Abuse: Exclusions

INFOCON 3 UNCLASSIFIED PFCOL Alpha

Determination Voting Process



Incident Information

Incident Number: 2 Offender Gender: Male Victim Type: Child Victim Gender: Male

Please select exclusions the Board decides to consider.

- Acts committed to protect self from imminent harm
- Acts committed during developmentally appropriate physical play
- Acts committed to protect child, another person or pet from imminent physical harm

Start Over Defer Submit

25/9 AM 8/13/2014

Child Physical Abuse: Sample Exclusion

The screenshot displays the FASOR (Fidelity Assessment System for Operations Reporting) CRB Decision Tree interface. At the top, the header includes the FASOR logo, the text "CRB Decision Tree", and an image of two fighter jets. Below the header, the "Incident Information" section shows: Incident Number: 2, Offender Gender: Male, Victim Type: Child, and Victim Gender: Male. The main content area is titled "Child Physical Abuse - Exclusion 2" and contains the text: "Acts committed during developmentally appropriate physical play (including, but not limited to, horseplay, wrestling, tackle football)." At the bottom, the "Board Members Vote" section shows "Yes 0" and "No 0" with dropdown arrows. Below the voting section are buttons for "Start Over", "Defer", "View Previous Vote", and "Submit". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the system clock as 11:01 AM on 8/13/2014.

Child Physical Abuse: Decision Screen

The screenshot displays the FASOR CRB Decision Tree software interface. At the top, the title bar shows 'FASOR 3', 'UNCLASSIFIED', and 'FASOR - Home'. Below the title bar is a header with the FASOR logo and the text 'FASOR CRB Decision Tree'. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Incident Information' and 'Voting Summary'.

Incident Information

Incident Number: 2 Offender Gender: Male Victim Type: Child Victim Gender: Male

Voting Summary

Issue	Yes	No	Decision
Child Physical Abuse			Met Criteria
Child Physical Abuse - Criterion A1	4	0	Met Criteria
Child Physical Abuse - Criterion B1	4	0	Met Criteria
Child Physical Abuse - Exclusion 1a	0	6	No
Child Physical Abuse - Exclusion 2	0	6	No
Child Physical Abuse - Exclusion 3	0	6	No

At the bottom of the interface, there are buttons for 'Start Over', 'Defer', 'Add New Maltreatment Type', 'Save Summary', and 'Done'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the system clock as 11:02 AM on 8/13/2014.

Child Neglect: Lack of Supervision - Act

The screenshot displays the FASOR CRS Decision Tree web application. At the top, there is a header with the FASOR logo and the text "CRS Decision Tree". Below this, a section titled "Incident Information" shows the following details: Incident Number: 3, Offender Gender: Male, Victim Type: Child, and Victim Gender: Male. The main content area is titled "Child Neglect - Criterion A1" and contains the following text: "Lack of supervision: **Egregious** absence or inattention by child's caregiver. Child's age and level of functioning should be considered in making determination about level of supervision required." A note below states: "Note: Leaving children ten or older unattended in a vehicle for brief periods of time in a safe area DOES NOT meet this criterion." A pop-up window titled "Dictionary" is open, defining "Egregious" as: "Egregious acts or omissions show striking disregard for child's well being. As such, they are not merely examples of inadvisable or deficient parenting, but must clearly fall below the lower bounds of normal parenting." At the bottom of the application, there is a "Board Members Vote" section with two dropdown menus: "Meets Criterion" (set to 0) and "Does NOT Meet Criterion" (set to 0). There are also buttons for "Start Over", "Defer", and "Submit".

Child Neglect: Decision Screen

FASOR
CRS Decision Tree

Incident Information
Incident Number: 3 Offender Gender: Male Victim Type: Child Victim Gender: Male

Voting Summary

Issue	Yes	No	Decision
Child Neglect			Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion A1	5	0	Met Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B1	0	5	Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B2a	0	5	Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B2b	0	6	Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B3	0	9	Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B4	0	7	Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B5a	0	9	Does Not Meet Criteria
Child Neglect - Criterion B5b	0	9	Does Not Meet Criteria

Start Over Defeat Add New Maltreatment Type Save Summary Done

11:11 AM
8/13/2014

Conclusions

- Given
 - Tremendous inconsistency in definitions of CAN used in different states/systems
 - Fairness to children and families necessitates consistency
- Then, must institute a systems that
 - Apply a standardized definition to make consistent classifications across worker and locality
 - Small changes in wording matter – do NOT have a committee modify the definitions
 - Use a decision tool to help remove bias
 - Decide criterion by criterion
 - Use structured, interactive training
 - Adopt a QA system to ensure timely, accurate tracking of “drift”