

Strength Summary Outline

Family Name:	Family Members: Because of the fact that you are likely to be dealing with large extended families and fairly complicated family relationships I think I would identify in these boxes: Household Family Members Additionally, it's helpful to consider putting ages in the household family members	Date of Conversation(s): Put the dates that you met here.
	Extended Family Members It's also helpful to add location for extended family members	
Parent Partner:		

Summary:

In this section you would want to summarize several things. First what, when and where brought the family to your attention. Second, how long has the family been seeking help? Third what was their stated concern that brought them to your attention? This paragraph should be factual and you should take great pains to avoid any inflammatory statements but still use family self report whenever possible.

The next paragraph should describe the family but in your case I would add a description of the household (who lives in it) and then the extended family (i.e. who is close on a regular basis). In this paragraph I would identify:

- Who are the parents?
- How long have they been together?
- Who are other family members? Within the household? Within the community?
- Who are far away but still are a presence?

The last paragraph in the summary should briefly describe when you met, where you met and what you're going to do next or the purpose of the report.

You can make the summary short: 1 to 4 paragraphs that really focus on facts of the situation.

Family

Use the paragraphs here to describe the family and family members. It's often helpful to start with family members who live in the household and their ages. In your case you should include extended family that are close or are likely to be part of any community based plan.

The narrative for this part can be from 1 to 4 paragraphs as well. I like to try to describe all of

the family members and get a sense of who is connected to who as well as what I can say about the good news about the family?

Some areas that can be helpful include these areas. **DO NOT TREAT THESE AS CHECKLISTS:**

- **Who is in this family, by their definition?**
- **Do all family members have appropriate access to each other?**
- **What do the members of the family need to stay together or in touch with each other?**
- **Are there serious, unmet needs for any family members that impair or worry the family about how things are happening?**
- **How does the family function as a collective?**
- **Are they a family that seems connected all of the time or only during a crisis?**
- **How do the big decisions get made within the family?**
- **Are there certain alliances within the family? How did the family get formed?**

A Place to Live

This should describe the physical layout of the family's home. This can be difficult if you haven't seen it. Ideally you would do these initial interviews at a place that is most comfortable for the family but it doesn't mean that you have to force the family to submit to a home visit. One paragraph would describe the house including bedrooms kitchen etc. Another paragraph would describe where the family goes in the house i.e. kitchen, living room, outside. Again, I would look to describe this in strength based terms: if the house is neat I would say that. If the house is messy I would say that the house is oriented towards children and communicates that relationship is more important than structure (or something like that)

Some questions to consider are:

- **Do the current living arrangements meet the family's needs?**
- **Is there enough space for everyone? Is there too much space?**
- **Are there any unique supervision issues that are likely to arise due to the location or physical layout (busy street for little kids, small square footage for children with physical handicaps that need space for rehab)?**
- **Where is the heart of the home?**
- **How do things happen in the home? Meal time? Bed time? Etc.**

Safety

This section describes not only safety issues but protective capacities and ways that the family has coped with unsafe situations in the past. This area is tricky because you want to avoid judgment but still capture the real concerns of family members. Additionally if there are concerns that are system based you have to speak to the facts without judgment.

Some helpful questions to consider include:

- **Is everybody in the family safe?**
- **Are there dangers to individual family members?**
- **Is anybody potentially dangerous to themselves or to the community?**
- **Is there a history of violence? How has the family coped with that violence?**
- **How do they talk about those events?**
- **What does the family do to keep themselves safe?**
- **Are there hidden strengths associated with their ability to manage safety concerns?**
- **Is the house safe, are there any concerns (medications left out? Knives etc.?)**

Health

This section is where I would describe the health of family members. It is also where I would put the mental health diagnosis part. You can also put down health insurance information as well as any medical issues the family is dealing with...for small children, it's often helpful to identify any out of the ordinary health issues so that folks get a sense of what the family/parents are trying to juggle.

Some helpful questions to answer include:

- **Are health care needs met?**
- **Does the family have access to any specialist services they may need?**
- **What types of insurance exist?**
- **What types of diagnosis are they dealing with? Mental health or physical?**
- **If parents are older do they have enough support physically to provide care?**
- **Are there medicines that family members are taking? What are they?**

Fun

This section is focused on what the family does socially and for fun. I would start with one paragraph that describes the entire family and then one paragraph that describes the interests and activities of each family member. I would also identify any community activities that the family has been involved with either in the past or currently.

- **Do family members have friends and access to their friends?**
- **Does this family have the opportunity to socialize with each other? As individuals?**
- **Do they have any fun?**
- **Do they have any way to relax?**
- **What is their best memory of fun together as a family?**
- **What would they each say about another family member's best recent time?**

School /Work

In this section you would want to identify the child's current educational placement, any concerns about learning as well as his/her strengths and interests. This is also the area where you would identify other family members schooling as well as the family's orientation about education and its value. A sentence or two about the adults work experience or current vocation would also be helpful and important in building a balanced view of the entire family. Ways that the family manages a work/family life could also be helpful in this area.

Some questions to consider:

- **What will it take to ensure a viable education for the children, particularly the identified client?**
- **Do older children (especially transition age) have access to employment opportunities?**
- **For what sort of future are they being prepared?**
- **Are their rights intact in an educational setting?**
- **What value does the family place on education? Work?**
- **Are there unique learning styles associated with the child or his family?**

Legal

Use this section to list what you have learned about what's going on with the family legally. This is a hard life domain for a couple of reasons. First of all, if things were going really well there would be nothing going on in this area i.e. no court issues, no legal issues. Additionally, court or system issue often come up here and when they do there is a tendency to put down what the court (or Child Welfare worker or Probation Officer) wants and call that a need or a strength. On the other hand, this is helpful as an area to raise concerns that can be addressed in supporting the whole family.

Some areas that can be considered include:

- **Are any family members involved in the judicial system, on probation or parole? Do they have representation?**
- **Are there issues around custody?**
- **Are there wills in place if anything happens to the caregiver?**
- **Who will legally take care of the children?**
- **Are there legal or court processes that are impacting the family and how they function?**
- **In the case of step parents do they have any rights?**

Feelings

This area is frequently referred to as the emotional, psychological or behavioral domains. I like feelings better because we often can escape the stigma of mental health. This area can be where you identify any diagnosis (unless you've done that in the health domain) as well as

provide a brief summary of services that have been provided. You can describe what is worrisome to the parents as well as the child and identify what services or interventions have been most effective. You can also use this area to identify linkages or strategies that are available to the family.

Some areas to consider in this area include:

- **Does the referred individual have any unmet needs in these areas? Other family members? Are there unresolved issues that impede normal interactions within the family or in the community?**
- **How does the family deal with mental health concerns? How do they talk about mental health issues? Are there special terms that the child or family uses when describing high emotional events (“one of his spells”)? Does the family see some of the behaviors as a function of the child being willful or a function of an underlying illness? What is their orientation to recovery?**
- **How optimistic are they that things can get better? Do they see the person with the diagnosis as needing to be fixed or in some other way?**
- **What types of information do they have access to that would allow them to provide support to the person with the diagnosis?**

Culture

Use this area to paint a picture of the unique family culture associated with this household. Starting with big cultural assignments (race, ethnicity etc.) then start to move more specifically to a family focused description. Remember to consider values, orientation, beliefs, patterns and associations. If you are starting with ethnicity or race make sure you describe what they describe rather than assigning a cultural significance because of your knowledge base.

Some questions to consider in this area include:

- **Who is this family ethnically? Racially? Nationality?**
- **What values do they hold in terms of parenting, role of children, and role of pets? How do they speak about themselves and other families?**
- **What does their home say about their world view?**
- **Are you aware of their stance relative to system intervention (a good thing, a necessary thing, a shameful thing, something else?)**
- **What is their concept of justice? Beauty? Good Manners?**