Investigations
Day 5 – Participant Manual

From Investigation to Documentation

Documentation Fundamentals

Writing the Investigation Narrative

CHRIS Documentation

From Investigation to Case Story

Day 5:

Investigations Training Agenda

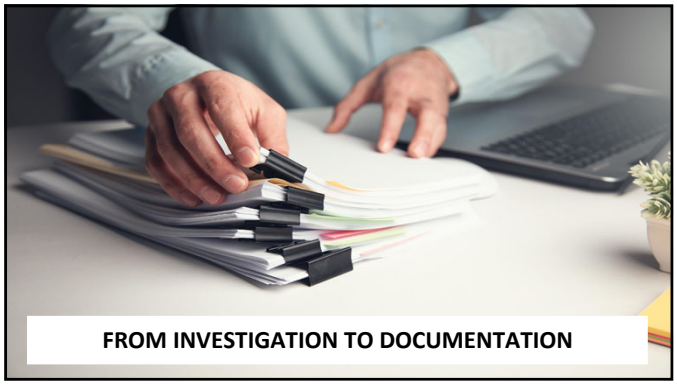
Monday	
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome From Investigation to Documentation
9:30 – 10:30	Documentation Fundamentals
10:30 -10:45	**Break**
10:45 – 12:00	Writing the Investigation Narrative
12:00 – 1:00	**Lunch Break**
1:00 – 2:00	CHRIS Documentation
2:00 - 2:15	**Break**
2:15 – 3:15	From Investigation to Case Story
3:15 – 4:00	Wrap Up and Review Post Test

Investigations
Specialty Training

MidSOUTH
College of Business, Health, and Human Services
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Day 5

1



FROM INVESTIGATION TO DOCUMENTATION

2

Supporting Investigative Decisions Through Quality Documentation

3

Target Outcomes

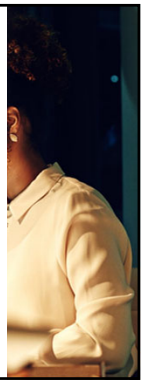
- Understand how documentation supports investigative decision-making and case continuity.
- Apply information gathered during investigations to objective narrative writing and documentation practices.
- Assess whether documentation clearly reflects observable conditions, behaviors, and safety threats.

4

Documentation Supports the Investigation

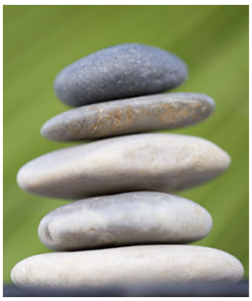
5

The Foundation of Quality Documentation



6

Building the Foundation for Quality Documentation



7

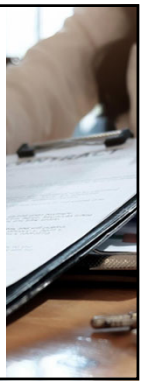
8

Target Outcomes

- Understand how quality documentation supports investigations, decision-making, and case continuity.
- Apply objective documentation principles to investigative narratives and observations.
- Assess whether documentation clearly reflects observable conditions, behaviors, and safety threats.

9

What Belongs In Documentation?



10

Turning Information Into Narrative Documentation

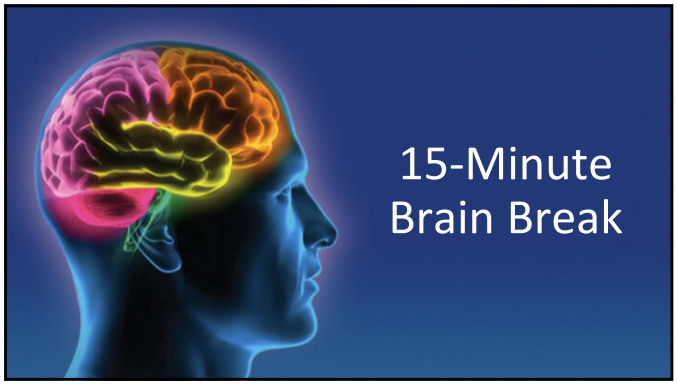
11

Reviewing Documentation Quality and Decision Support

12

Building Strong Documentation Practices

13



14

15

Writing The Investigation Narrative

Why does documentation matter?

16

Target Outcomes

- Understand how observation-based documentation supports investigative clarity and credibility.
- Apply objective descriptive writing to investigative narratives and observations.
- Assess whether narrative documentation clearly reflects observable conditions, behaviors, and investigative detail.

17

Describing What You Observe

18

Writing Objective Narrative Descriptions

19

How Different Investigators Document the Same Situation

20

How Context Changes Documentation

21

Observation, Documentation and Investigative Thinking

22

23

24

CHRIS DOCUMENTATION

What documentation are Specialists responsible for during an investigation?

25

Target Outcomes

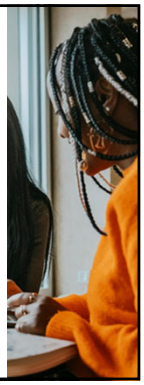
- Understand how CHRIS documentation supports investigative decisions, case continuity, and court involvement.
- Apply objective documentation principles to CHRIS-style investigative documentation and contact narratives.
- Assess whether CHRIS documentation clearly reflects investigative actions, observations, safety concerns, and decision-making.

26

Building Clear, Organized, and Supportable Documentation

27

Analyzing Documentation Quality



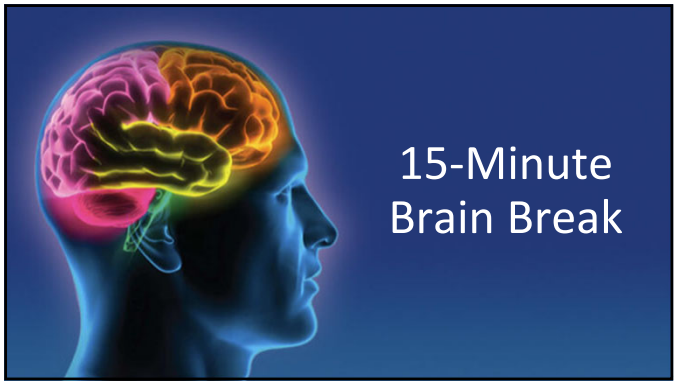
28

Improving Clarity, Objectivity, and Investigative Support

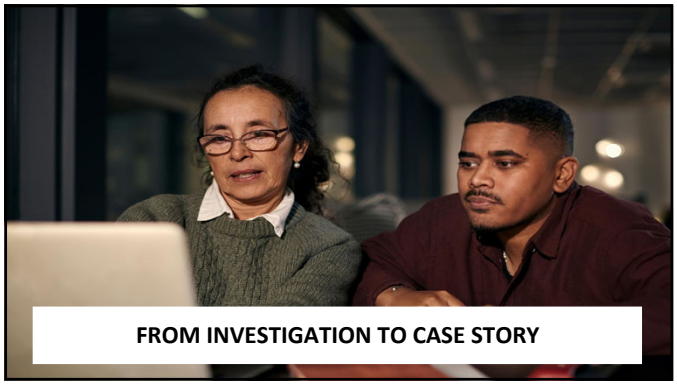
29

Applying Documentation Skills to Investigative Practice

30



31



32

FROM INVESTIGATION TO CASE STORY

How are investigative decisions are influenced by interviews, observations, assessments, and collateral information?

33

Target Outcomes

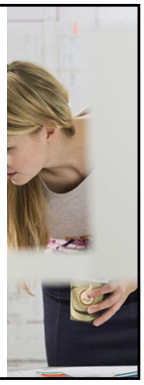
- Understand how investigations evolve as additional information is gathered throughout the case process.
- Apply investigative information, documentation, and decision-making concepts to the overall progression of a case.
- Assess how investigative actions, safety concerns, documentation, and decisions collectively shape the story of an investigation.

34

How Investigations Evolve Over Time

35

Connecting Information, Decisions, and Actions



36

Connecting the Full Investigation Process

37

Target Outcomes Evaluation

38

OBJECTIVE VS SUBJECTIVE DOCUMENTATION EXAMPLES

PART 1 – IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Directions:

Review each statement and identify:

- Objective wording.
- Subjective wording.
- Assumptions.
- Labels.
- Missing observable information.

Example 1

Documentation Statement:

"Charlotte was crazy and out of control."

Problems Identified:

Rewrite Objectively:

Example 2

Documentation Statement:

"The home was disgusting and unsafe."

Problems Identified:

Rewrite Objectively:

Example 3

Documentation Statement:

"The child was obviously abused."

Problems Identified:

Rewrite Objectively:

Example 4

Documentation Statement:

"Mom did not care about the children."

Problems Identified:

Rewrite Objectively:

PART 2 – OBJECTIVE DOCUMENTATION PRACTICE

Directions:

Rewrite the following statements using:

- Observable behaviors.
- Direct quotes.
- Specific conditions.
- Objective descriptions.

Statement:

"The home was filthy."

Objective Rewrite:

Statement:

"Charlotte was unstable."

Objective Rewrite:

Statement:

"The child looked neglected."

Objective Rewrite:

PART 3 – REFLECTION

Why is objective documentation important?

How can assumptions weaken documentation?

ORGANIZING INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION

Determining Relevant Information & Chronological Organization

---

Directions

Investigators often gather large amounts of information from:

- Interviews
- Observations
- Collateral contacts
- Historical information
- Law enforcement
- Safety assessments

Not all information carries the same level of importance, and not all information belongs in formal documentation.

Review the investigative notes below and work with your group to:

1. Identify information relevant to child safety and investigative decision-making.
2. Identify information that may be:
    - Irrelevant.
    - Opinion-based.
    - Unsupported.
    - Incomplete.
3. Organize the information chronologically.
4. Determine which information supports:
    - Threats to safety.
    - Safety decisions.
    - Protective custody decisions

SECTION 1 – INVESTIGATIVE NOTES

Review the following investigative notes gathered throughout the Flowers' investigation:

- Charlotte stated she was "done with everybody trying to control her."
- Frankie reported staying overnight alone previously.
- Georgia reported concerns about Charlotte leaving the state with the children.
- Neighbor stated Charlotte "has always been a bad mom."
- Jasmine had not received prescribed medication.
- Dirty dishes observed in sink.
- Charlotte stated she planned to leave for California to where no one could find her or the children.
- Law enforcement responded to the residence.
- Frankie appeared tearful during specialist contact.
- Georgia stated Charlotte refused assistance.
- Charlotte wore pajama pants during contact.
- Brad has prior domestic violence conviction.
- Child observed wearing a heavily soiled shirt.
- Frankie reported helping care for Jasmine.
- Charlotte stated that Jasmine "did not need medication."
- Specialist observed Charlotte pacing and yelling near the vehicle.
- Charlotte reported being tired of Brad blaming her for everything.
- Law enforcement observed Charlotte yelling loudly outside the residence.
- Frankie reported worrying about Jasmine when Charlotte sleeps for "a long time."
- Empty alcohol containers observed near the kitchen trash can.
- Georgia stated she attempted to assist with Jasmine's medication, but Charlotte refused.
- Charlotte reported wanting to "start over somewhere else."
- Neighbor stated police come to the residence "all the time."
- Jasmine appeared tired and irritable during contact.
- Specialist observed clutter throughout the living room floor area.
- Frankie reported helping prepare bottles and snacks for Jasmine.
- Charlotte stated DCFS "needed to leave her family alone."
- Law enforcement remained on scene due to escalating conflict.

SECTION 2 – IDENTIFYING RELEVANT INFORMATION

Directions:

Review the notes and identify information that directly supports:

- Threats to safety.
- Safety concerns.
- Investigative decision-making.
- Protective custody considerations.

Information Most Relevant to Safety Concerns:

Information That Supports Investigative Decisions:

Information That May Require Additional Clarification or Verification:

Information That May Be Irrelevant, Opinion-Based, or Unsupported:

SECTION 3 – ORGANIZING THE INFORMATION

Directions:

Place the information into the categories below.

Background / Historical Information

Current Safety Concerns

Direct Quotes

Specialist Observations

Collateral Information

Actions Taken / Responses

SECTION 4 – CHRONOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Directions:

Using the information provided, identify how the events may have unfolded chronologically.

Beginning of Escalation

Escalating Safety Concerns

Immediate Safety Concerns / Crisis Point

Protective Actions / Responses

SECTION 5 – REFLECTION

Why is organization important in documentation?

How can poor organization impact understanding of a case?

How does documentation support investigative decision-making?

Observation Narrative Activity

Observation vs Interpretation in Investigative Documentation

Participant Directions

You will receive an investigative scenario/ image.

Using only what you observe:

1. Write an objective narrative description.
2. Avoid assumptions or conclusions.
3. Describe:
    - Observable behaviors.
    - Conditions.
    - Physical observations.
    - Environmental details.

Do NOT:

- Diagnose.
- Label.
- Interpret.
- Assume intent or cause.

After writing your narrative:

- Compare narratives within your group.
- Discuss:
    - Differences in wording.
    - Missing details.
    - Assumptions.
    - Strong objective descriptions.

SCENARIO 1 – POSSIBLE INJURY

Participant Scenario

You observe blue-gray markings across the lower back and buttocks area of a 3-year-old child during contact. The child appears calm and is interacting appropriately with the caregiver. Write an objective narrative description documenting your observations.

Narrative Response

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Group Discussion Questions

- What wording differed between group members?
- Did anyone make assumptions regarding the markings?
- What details were important to include?
- What wording remained objective?

SCENARIO 2 – ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Participant Scenario

During contact in the home, you observe:

- Dirty dishes in the sink
- Laundry stacked on furniture
- Toys and miscellaneous items on the living room floor
- Food present in the refrigerator
- Running water and electricity functioning

Write an objective narrative description documenting your observations.

Narrative Response

Group Discussion Questions

- What descriptions became subjective?
- What details supported or weakened concerns?
- Did anyone overstate environmental concerns?
- What observable details were important?

SCENARIO 3 – SUPERVISION CONCERN

Participant Scenario

You observe a 6-year-old child standing outside an apartment building without shoes. The child appears calm and is looking toward an apartment doorway. An adult caregiver is standing inside the doorway approximately 10 feet away. Write an objective narrative description documenting your observations.

Narrative Response

Group Discussion Questions

- What assumptions appeared in narratives?
- What details changed how the situation was interpreted?
- What additional information would be needed?
- What wording remained objective?

SCENARIO 4 – CHILD PRESENTATION

Participant Scenario

You observe a child wearing stained clothing and appearing tired during school contact. The child reports going to bed late because there were “a lot of people at the house.” Write an objective narrative description documenting your observations.

Narrative Response

Group Discussion Questions

- What conclusions were participants tempted to make?
- What details supported objective documentation?
- What additional information would be needed?
- What wording strengthened documentation credibility?

FINAL GROUP REFLECTION

Reflection Questions

1. How did different participants document the same scenario differently?

2. What assumptions appeared most often?

3. Why is objective documentation important in investigations?

4. How can assumptions weaken investigative documentation?

5. What documentation strategies improved clarity and credibility?

CHRIS DOCUMENTATION REVIEW PACKET

Reviewing Documentation Quality and Decision Support

Purpose

This activity is designed to help participants:

- Review CHRIS-style documentation.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in documentation quality.
- Practice objective narrative writing.
- Improve investigative documentation clarity.
- Strengthen decision-support documentation.

Participants will:

- Review mock CHRIS contact narratives.
- Identify:
    - Missing information.
    - Weak wording.
    - Unsupported conclusions.
    - Assumptions.
    - Organizational issues.
- Rewrite and improve documentation entries.

SECTION 1 – REVIEWING CHRIS DOCUMENTATION

Review each CHRIS documentation entry.

As a group:

1. Identify:
    - Objective wording
    - Problematic wording
    - Missing information
    - Assumptions or unsupported conclusions
    - Strengths and weaknesses in documentation quality
2. Determine:
    - Whether the documentation clearly supports investigative understanding and decision-making.
3. Be prepared to discuss:
    - What strengthened or weakened each documentation entry.

ENTRY 1 – HANNAH LEWIS INTERVIEW

CHRIS ENTRY – VERSION A (WEAK)

"Talked to reporter Hannah Lewis. She said the family was a mess and Charlotte does not take care of the kids. Reporter said Jasmine is always dirty and Frankie has to do everything. Charlotte sounds unstable and does not care what happens."

Participant Questions

- What wording is problematic?
- What assumptions or conclusions are present?
- What observable or investigative details are missing?
- How could this documentation be improved?

CHRIS ENTRY – VERSION B (STRONGER)

"Specialist completed phone contact with reporter Hannah Lewis on 04/18/26. Hannah Lewis reported concerns regarding supervision and caregiver functioning within the home. Reporter stated Frankie 'helps take care of Jasmine a lot' and reported concerns that Jasmine frequently appeared unclean during daycare drop-off. Reporter stated she observed Frankie appearing tired at school on multiple occasions. Reporter expressed concern regarding Charlotte's ability to consistently supervise and care for the children."

Participant Questions

- What strengthened this documentation?
- What observable information improved clarity?
- How does this version better support investigative understanding?

ENTRY 2 – CHARLOTTE INTERVIEW

CHRIS ENTRY – VERSION A (WEAK)

"Charlotte was acting crazy during contact and refused to cooperate. She was yelling and would not listen. She was obviously unstable and did not seem to care about the kids."

Participant Questions

- What wording weakens the documentation?
- What conclusions or labels are present?
- What observable details are missing?
- How could this entry impact credibility?

CHRIS ENTRY – VERSION B (STRONGER)

"Specialist completed face-to-face contact with Charlotte Flowers on 04/19/26 at the family residence. During contact, Charlotte was observed pacing throughout the living room area and speaking loudly during discussion regarding the Immediate Safety Plan. Charlotte stated DCFS 'needed to leave her family alone' and refused to discuss placement alternatives with Georgia Flowers. Charlotte became tearful intermittently during contact and repeatedly stated she planned to leave the state with the children."

Participant Questions

- What wording strengthened this entry?
- What observable details improved documentation quality?
- How does this documentation better support investigative understanding and decision-making?

ENTRY 3 – FRANKIE INTERVIEW

CHRIS ENTRY – VERSION A (WEAK)

"Frankie seemed neglected and said she has to take care of Jasmine because Charlotte sleeps all the time. Frankie looked sad and overwhelmed."

Participant Questions

- What assumptions are present?
- What details need clarification?
- What wording should be revised?
- What additional information would strengthen the documentation?

CHRIS ENTRY – VERSION B (STRONGER)

"Specialist completed individual contact with Frankie Flowers on 04/19/26 at the residence. Frankie reported she 'helps take care of Jasmine a lot' and stated she prepares bottles and snacks for Jasmine when Charlotte is sleeping. Frankie appeared tearful during portions of the interview and stated she worries about Jasmine 'when mom sleeps for a long time.' Frankie reported she sometimes stays awake to help care for Jasmine."

Participant Questions

- What strengthened this documentation?
- What direct quotes improved clarity?
- How does this documentation better support investigative concerns and understanding?

SECTION 2 – IDENTIFYING DOCUMENTATION PROBLEMS

Directions

Review the weak documentation examples and identify:

- Unsupported assumptions
- Emotional wording
- Labels
- Missing chronology
- Missing investigative actions
- Missing observations
- Missing direct quotes
- Weak organization

Problematic Wording Identified

Missing Investigative Information

Unsupported Conclusions or Assumptions

SECTION 3 – REWRITING DOCUMENTATION

Directions

Rewrite ONE of the weak documentation examples using:

- Objective wording
- Observable behaviors
- Direct quotes when appropriate
- Chronological organization
- Clear investigative actions

Rewritten Documentation Entry

SECTION 4 – DOCUMENTATION REFLECTION

Reflection Questions

How does documentation quality impact investigative understanding?

Why is objective wording important in CHRIS documentation?

How can assumptions weaken investigative documentation?

What documentation practices improve clarity and credibility?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Strong CHRIS documentation should:

- Clearly explain investigative actions.
- Use objective and observable descriptions.
- Support investigative decisions.
- Avoid assumptions and labels.
- Help others understand the investigation clearly and accurately.