

Questions to ask during a *Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA)* interview:

The goal of the *Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA)* interview is to provide information to the court regarding the defendant's minor children. It is also an opportunity to engage the defendant in considering their role as a parent in their child's life and how to best support them. Ideally, the conversation offers an opportunity for rich discussion and may also facilitate referrals, connecting a child/family to community resources and potential support.

Regarding the defendant's relationship with and caregiving responsibilities for minor children:

1. How many children do you have and what are their ages?
2. Do your children reside with you, and where? If not, with whom do they live, and where?
3. Are you the primary caregiver for any of your children? If you are not the primary caregiver, what are your responsibilities in relation to your children?
4. What is your relationship with your children like? (Specific examples are helpful here.)
5. Do you financially support your children? Is there an active child support case?
6. Did the current offense involve violence? Family violence?
7. Were any children placed at risk because of the circumstances of this offense?
8. Is DCF currently or were they previously involved with your family?

Optional question: Are there other family members who are dependent on you for financial or other support (for example an elderly parent, developmentally challenged adult child, or children of your partner who live with you)?

Regarding the impact of incarceration on the children:

9. How will a period of incarceration impact your children?
10. How will it influence your family's ability to provide economic support and stability for your children, including housing, medical and mental health treatment, childcare, and educational needs?
11. How will you maintain a relationship if separated? What are the potential barriers to communication and in-person or remote visitation?

Regarding relatives who may (or may not) be available to care for the children:

12. Are there suitable relatives who are willing and available to care for the children in your absence?
13. What is the potential caregiver's relationship with your children, and with you?
14. Where does the potential caregiver live?
15. Is the potential caregiver physically and financially able to provide for the children's needs?
16. Would the children have to move to a new community, school, or childcare?

Parental Responsibility Assessment (sample A)

State V. Tom S.

October 24, 2019

To assist the court in considering the needs of minor children during sentencing of their parent, Lamoille Restorative Center offers Parental Responsibility Assessments (PRA's) for defendants who are the primary caregivers of, or primary providers for, minor children.

A *Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA)* acknowledges the parent's accountability for their crime and the harm it has caused others, and also acknowledges the parent's responsibility to care and provide for their children. Research shows that children of incarcerated parents are three times more likely to experience things like: serious physical and mental health problems, school failure, substance misuse, delinquency, and eventual incarceration themselves.

The *PRA* is offered for consideration, not to minimize guilt, but rather to help the court safeguard minor children from suffering additionally and unnecessarily as a result of their parents' actions. Decisions informed by a *PRA* can benefit children, families, and communities, and create potential cost-savings to taxpayers.

Defendant's relationship with and caregiving responsibilities for minor children:

Tom S. is the father of two children, _____ age 10 and her brother _____ age 8. Tom is the primary caregiver for both children. They live full time with him, and they reside at _____.

Tom is solely responsible for their physical care, emotional, and financial support. He consistently attends to his children's needs: He advocates for them in school to assure their educational and social success; he attends to their medical, mental health, and emotional needs.

When their mother left the household, Tom became the primary parental figure for his children. He supported them in adjusting to the changes and worked to establish consistency for them. He took on all care-giving responsibilities such as cooking, getting them up and on the bus each morning, greeting them with a snack after school, attending school meetings, and assuring their general health and wellbeing.

Although this family is currently open with DCF, there has been significant progress and the DCF worker reports they will be closing the case if this positive course continues. The children's progress has been noticed across venues. The school has seen a marked difference in both children's academic progress and confidence, as well as noticing a more positive attitude. Tom has been consistent in getting the kids to counseling. Both children have established strong relationships with mental health counselors, and they are starting to engage in community activities.

Tom's offense did not involve violence. Although an intoxicated driver puts many people at risk, the circumstances of this offense did not compromise his children's immediate safety. They were not in the car, nor were any other children.

Impact of incarceration on children:

The children's current well-being is in large measure due to Tom's consistent presence, supporting them and building a network around them. Even a short period of incarceration will disrupt the progress this family has made toward establishing more stability in their everyday life. Given the children's already disrupted attachment with their mother, a subsequent disrupted attachment to their father will likely have significant adverse and potentially life-long impacts.

Progress toward important family goals will also be interrupted and set back. Tom's goals include: school success for the children; getting physical, dental and mental health needs met for both kids and himself; and maintaining employment, financial security, and housing stability. Tom owns a mobile home and is up to date with lot rent, but he would not be able to maintain this if incarcerated.

Relatives who may (or may not) be available to care for the children:

The children's mother is living with her current boyfriend. To date, visits and contact with her have been inconsistent and unreliable which has resulted in disrupted attachment and adversity. She does not participate in any of the school meetings for the children, and does not provide for them physically or financially.

There is an uncle (mom's brother) who lives in Wolcott. Because of difficult circumstances in his own life right now, he would not be a reliable or suitable caregiver. He may be able to watch the kids occasionally or help with transportation, but he does not have the resources to support them beyond that.

The children's paternal grandmother lives in Hardwick. She sustained a traumatic brain injury several years ago, which has left her unable to care for her grandchildren.

Tom has several siblings, but none of them are closely connected to the children or available to care for them. There are no other relatives to care for the children.

Signature, title and date

Parental Responsibility Assessment (sample B)

State V. Lea Y.

November 7, 2019

To assist the court in considering the needs of minor children during sentencing of their parent, Lamoille Restorative Center offers Parental Responsibility Assessments (PRA's) for defendants who are the primary caregivers of, or primary providers for, minor children.

A *Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA)* acknowledges the parent's accountability for their crime and the harm it has caused others, and also acknowledges the parent's responsibility to care and provide for their children. Research shows that children of incarcerated parents are three times more likely to experience things like: serious physical and mental health problems, school failure, substance misuse, delinquency, and eventual incarceration themselves.

The *PRA* is offered for consideration not to minimize guilt, but rather to help the court safeguard minor children from suffering additionally and unnecessarily as a result of their parent's actions. Decisions informed by a *PRA* can benefit children, families and communities, and create potential cost-savings to taxpayers.

Defendant's relationship with and caregiving responsibilities for minor children:

Lea is a 21-year-old single mother who lives at _____, with her 3-year-old son (ZY). There is no DCF involvement with this family. Lea's offense did not involve violence and her son was not placed at risk due to the circumstances of the offense.

Lea rents a bedroom in a larger house, and there are four others who also rent rooms in the house. Lea shares the rented room with ZY. They have lived there for three years, and have slept in the same room ever since he was born. One of the other tenants in the residence is Lea's mother, (SY). All tenants share the kitchen and living room. Lea's rent payment is \$100/week. If Lea leaves for a period of incarceration, her room will be rented to a new tenant.

During the interview, Lea spoke of how devastated she would feel if she is not able to raise her son. When Z was born, Lea's partner at the time was listed on ZY's birth certificate as his father, however it was later determined that he is not Z's biological father, and there is no contact between them. Lea talked about how important it is to have parents in your life. She shared that her own father was absent when she was growing up and how that impacted her.

ZY attends _____preschool, and a private home daycare in Hyde Park. The childcare provider (name) said that there is a very strong bond between Lea and her son. She said that ZY arrives on time, in clean clothes, and is very well cared for. She mentioned that he is always excited to see Lea at the end of the day, that he adores both his mom and grandma, and regularly talks about Mommy, Gram, and the things they all do together at home.

Impact of incarceration on children:

If Lea is incarcerated, her mother SY will take temporary guardianship of ZY. Lea is concerned about SY's ability to care for Z alone, both physically and financially. SY is a part time office worker and deals with ongoing health issues. She has had several surgeries, and continues to struggle with back pain.

SY said that her relationship with Lea hasn't always been smooth and it has become much better in recent years. She said that Lea does whatever she can for ZY, and is worried about how ZY will be impacted if Lea goes to prison. SY doesn't think prison will help Lea with her problems and she believes that Lea has made some positive changes over the last year. She talked about how Lea struggled through middle and high school and how she eventually achieved her high school diploma through the Adult Basic Ed program.

Lea works full time as a housekeeping manager and brings home about \$450/week. A conversation with her supervisor at _____ in Stowe confirmed that she has worked there since June 2017, earns \$14/hour, and that "she is a hard worker, dependable, and very diligent." Whether she could be re-employed there following a period of incarceration is questionable because of hiring regulations.

Preschool is free as it's provided by the public school. For daycare expenses, Lea has a subsidy through Lamoille Family Center that pays for 60% of the cost, leaving her with a bill of \$100 per week. If Lea is incarcerated, and guardianship for ZY is transferred to SY, the subsidy will be based on SY's income. The subsidy may be reduced if SY's income is greater than Lea's.

Lea's other expenses include transportation, groceries, phone, and supplies for ZY.

Relatives who may (or may not) be available to care for children:

Lea's mother, SY will accept temporary guardianship, however she has both physical and financial challenges that may impact her ability to provide care.

Lea has one sibling, a sister, who lives in Johnson. She is willing to help with ZY on occasion but could not take on the responsibility to care for him.

There are no other relatives who are able to care for ZY in his mother's absence.

Signature, title and date