

# A Day in the Life of a Child Welfare Caseworker: All before Noon

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I get to the office at 8:00 AM.

I pick up my mail, which consists of several items.

When I reach my office cubical I notice there are several sticky notes; some on my chair and others on my computer monitor. Out of the corner of my eye I notice the phone is flashing and there are messages waiting for me. Before I can take my coat off, someone is in my cubical asking for assistance on one of their cases.

Once I'm able to turn on my computer I check my calendar. I have a SAR this afternoon and a couple home visits scheduled for tonight. Sitting beside my computer is a pile of leftover work from yesterday. This needs my attention right away.

My phone begins to ring. The Quality Assurance (QA) person asks if I received their email. I tell them I was at a home visit yesterday afternoon when it was sent. The QA person insists a form needs to be submitted right away so he can close out the stats for last month. As soon as I hang up with the QA person my supervisor calls. She asks if I have followed up with the school as we had discussed during our conference yesterday. I tell her "I was out doing home visits yesterday, but before I left I put a note on the secretary's desk asking her to track down the information."

The secretary walks up to my cubical. She says she doesn't understand the note I left for her yesterday. Consequently, the three phone calls that I asked her to make didn't get done. I asked her "Why didn't you call my cell phone for clarification?" She responds, "I didn't know it was time-sensitive."

My phone rings and it's Bellefaire. The person on the other line asks if I've listened to the message he left yesterday. I inform him that I was out of the office most of the day and haven't had a chance to listen to my messages yet. He says "There is a meeting in 30 minutes at Hilltop Academy. You need to be there."

I look at the clock.

I turn to the sticky notes that were left on my seat and computer monitor. The first one is from the case aide. She is not able to transport for a visit scheduled for today at 2:00 PM, and she wasn't able to find a substitute. What am I going to do? The parents don't have a phone and the foster caregivers haven't been informed of the problem yet. The second note is from the Human Resources Manager. He would like to meet with me regarding a complaint that has been lodged against me by a client. The note reads "Meet with me TODAY! ASAP!" This, of course, was yesterday.

As I begin to gather my stuff to take to the meeting at the Hilltop Academy, I listen to my phone messages. I write down the names and numbers from the voicemails. The first one I have to replay

several times because the caller mumbled the phone number. The second message is from the school that the secretary was supposed to call. The final message is from Bellefaire informing me of the meeting this morning. They request I bring a document from the case file, which I then scramble to find. I now have 10 minutes to get to the meeting at the Hilltop Academy.

On my way out of the office the receptionist pages me. When I stop by her desk she points out that there is a gentleman sitting in the lobby who is demanding to talk to a child's caseworker. He says he is this child's real father. I explain to the receptionist that I am headed to a meeting for which I'm already late. I ask her to get another caseworker to come out and speak with him and collect his information.

As I pass through the lobby I pass a gentleman reading a magazine.

After the meeting at the Hilltop Academy, I return to the office and find my supervisor and the secretary are looking for something in my cubicle. My supervisor explains impatiently that the school called and has to have the journal entry immediately. They said they have been waiting for a week.

I turn to my computer to see I've received a new case and my phone is flashing again.

The Human Resource Manager peaks his head into my cubical. "Oh, there you are," he smiles. I then spend the next 25 minutes talking to them about the complaint.

As soon as I sit down at my desk again I hear my name being paged by the receptionist. The gentleman who claims to be the "real father" of a child on my caseload is still waiting for me in the lobby. I meet with him.

As I step into the elevator to go back to my cubical, the Family Based Care (FBC) worker asks if I received a call from a foster mother about what happened last night. The FBC worker fills me in. The foster mother is threatening to disrupt the placement. The FBC worker promised the foster mother that I would visit with her and the child today.

Still trying to get back to my cubical, I pass my supervisor and she calls me into her office. She asks if I have gotten the information from the Juvenile Probation Officer I need for the Family Team Meeting. I let her know I've put in a call to the Probation Officer and I'm waiting to hear back from him.

Finally, I reach my cubical. I open my email inbox and begin to delete the spam emails. I find an email that was sent late yesterday regarding a committee meeting that was rescheduled for this morning. I missed the committee meeting again.

My co-worker steps into my cubical and asks "Where are we going for lunch?"

It's noon.