

LIFE HISTORY CHECKLIST

Clients Name:

Clients' Mother:

Clients' Father:

Siblings (if any) :

I. Birth Records

A. Where to Look

1. Birth Certificate (Department of Vital Statistics)
2. Hospital/clinic records of birth
3. Physician/clinic records of pregnancy
4. The family Bible
5. The family photograph album
6. Local newspaper announcements
7. Welfare Department (for AFDC)
8. Social security files.

B. What to Look For

1. Different parents
 - 1a. Was the defendant adopted?
 - 1b. Low birth weights
 - 1c. Place and date of birth

1d. Parents and siblings

1e. Social security numbers of parents and
the name of the family doctor.

Mom:

Dad:

II. Pre-Natal, Birth, Post-Partum Medical Records:

A. Where to Look

1.1) .Physician at the time of birth

1(2). Midwife

1(3). Hospital records of the birth and
post-partem.

1a. Try to locate the mother's notarized
release for all of the medical records.
(Do not limit the inquiry just to birth
records as subsequent inquiries into the
defendant's mental health may be
necessary.

B. What to Look For:

1(1). Edema

1(2). Anemia

1(3). Weight loss/gain

1(4). Any medicine during pregnancy and
childbirth

1(5). Any illness during pregnancy

1(6). Length of labor

1(7). Use of forceps

1(8). Birth weight

1(9). Alcohol and drug use by the
defendant's parents

1(10). Any stress that would have
interfered with oxygen, menstrual flow to
the mother

1(11). The age of the mother at birth

1(12). Medical complications

1(13). Diseases at infancy

III. Early Childhood

A. Where to Look

(1). All hospital records of emergency
room visits or abnormal childhood diseases

(2). Social service records,

(3). Including SSI and AFDC.

B. What to Look For:

(1). Physical trauma especially head
injuries or anything that would cause
hypoxia

(2). Abuse or neglect complaints

(3). Medical treatment for fever or abnormal illnesses

(4). Weight gain or loss

(5). Inoculation or lack thereof

(6). Growth charts.

IV. Siblings

A. Where to Look

(1). Criminal justice records!

(2). Biographical information

(3). Medical and social service records for any sibling with mental! emotional or legal problems.

B. What to Look For:

(1). Family history of mental! emotional and physical problems.

V. Immediate and Extended Family

A. Where to Look

(1). Birth/death certificates of any family member sharing home or with a history of emotional or physical problems

(2). Check mental institutionalization records (If applicable)

(3). Military records

(4). Social service records

B. What to Look For:

(1). Family history of mental illness

(2). Emotional problems

(3). Drug or alcohol dependency

VI. School Records

A. Where to Look

(1). Elementary, secondary, post-high school records

(2). Contact teachers, counselors, or school administrators who may remember the defendant or the defendant's family

(3). Retired teachers and those that have moved to other districts can be located through the personnel office of the local school board and through the teacher's union.

(4). School records from juvenile facilities

(5). Referrals for psychological testing

(6). School yearbooks.

B. What to Look For

(1). **Attendance**

(2). Teachers observations and notes of the defendant's educational development

(3). Standardized test scores

(4). IQ tests

(5). School nurse entries any of this relevant information should also be located for the defendant's siblings.

VII. Juvenile Records

A. Where to Look

(1). For client and siblings from shelters

(2). Juvenile homes

(3). Juvenile detention centers

(4). Lawsuits and investigations against any of the facilities.

B. What to Look for

(1). Psychological testing

(2). Suicide attempts

(3). Reports of child abuse

(4). Medical records

(5). School records

(6). Job assignments

(7). Names of counselor and teachers

(8). Housing assignments

(9). Disciplinary reports.

VIII. Military Records

A. Where to Look

(1). All military records including those deemed confidential

B. What to Look For

(1). Substance abuse

(2). IQ scores

(3). Educational and vocational test results

(4). Literacy tests

(5). Referral for psychological counseling and testing

(6). Injuries

(7). Awards

(8). Disciplinary reports

(9). Station (to find those who knew him during service.)

IX. Employment Records

A. Where to Look

- (1). Pay sheets
- (2). Job assignments
- (3). Personnel reports
- (4). Medical leave
- (5). Referrals for counseling
- (6). Reports of the employer from other sources
- (7). Harvest of Shame, for migrant workers.
- (8). Description of employers services
- (9). Workmenrs compensation/unemployment benefits.

B. What to Look For

- (1). Use of organic solvents at the work place
- (2). Exposure to toxic fumes or toxic agents -- To develop a causal relation to employment and brain damage

X. psychiatric Records

- A. For both the defendant and family members
- B. Medical records
- C. Previous testing done in other criminal investigations
- D. Testing done at a juvenile facility or in the military
- E. Medication charts
- F. Evidence of electroshock therapy
- G. Behavior modification programs
- H. Experimentation projects done in any facilities in which the defendant spent some time.

XI. Social Service Records

A. Where to Look

- (1). Welfare
- (2). AFDC
- (3). Job training
- (4). SSI
- (5). Mental health counseling for the defendant and family
- (6). Beneficiary-guardian proceedings
- (7). Confidential reports about abuse and neglect.

B. What to Look For

1. Dysfunctional family
2. Substance abuse
3. Mental health notes
4. Economic status
5. Social worker's notes
6. Referrals for testing

XII. Criminal Record

A. Complete file on any prior crimes

1. Court records
2. Transcripts
3. Public defender's or the prosecution's investigations
4. Autopsy of the victim if a prior crime is involved
5. Death of the victim
6. Probation and parole reports.

B. What to Look For

1. Determination of incompetency

2. Referral for psychiatric evaluation

3. Grounds to challenge validity and reliability of the prior offense.

(a). Was he not counseled

(b). Change in the law

(c). Lack of violence in the crime

(d). Law enforcement notes on the defendant's mental state.

XIII. Prison or Jail Records

A. Where to Look

- 1.- From all prior incarcerations
2. Including pre-trial on priors and weekly review of current jail records
3. Medical and medication charts
4. Disciplinary reports
5. Cell assignments
6. Visiting logs
7. Psychological tests
8. Educational tests
9. Job assignments

10. Lawsuits and investigation on prison conditions where the defendant was held.

B. What to Look For

1. Antipsychotic medication
2. Intelligence or vocational test scores
3. Potential for rehabilitation
4. Parole
5. Acts of heroism
6. Guards notes about the defendant's mental state during incarceration.

XIV. FBI/DEA Records

A. Use a Freedom of Information Act request to get documents concerning prior offenses.

B. Look for:

1. Grounds to challenge priors
2. Mental state
3. Drug abuse

4. Investigator's notes

XV. Previous and Current Co-defendants

A. Where to Look

1. Locate as many criminal justice records as obtainable
2. Life history
3. Nicknames
4. Reputation in the community

B. What to Look For

1. Domination
2. Propensity for violence
3. Higher intelligence
4. Psychological reports
5. Lengthier record

XVI. AN OVERVIEW -- IN AN INTERVIEW

A. What to ask for

1. Friends
2. Employers
3. Co-workers
4. Teachers
5. Principals
6. Coaches
7. Military superiors or peers
8. Spouse
9. Children
10. Girlfriends
11. Clergy
12. Prior attorneys and prosecutors
13. Prior co-defendants
14. In-laws
15. Parents friends

XVII. What to Look For Generally

A. Family history of psychiatric hospitalization

1. suicide
2. depression
3. mental retardation
4. organic brain disorders

5. mental health problems
6. congenital diseases and disorders
7. seizures

B. Family history of sexual, physical,
psychological abuse and neglect

C. Difficult pregnancy for the mother

- (1). birth trauma
- (2). in-utero medication
- (3). fetal alcohol syndrome
- (4). physical abuse to the mother during
pregnancy

D. Slow development

- (1). illnesses during developmental years
- (2). diet during developmental years
- (3). any and all head injuries
- (4). scars of the defendant's body
- (5). blackouts

E. Substance abuse

F. Poor school performance

(1). absenteeism

(2). performance on intelligence tests

G. Marked changes in behavior

H. Exposure to toxins or chemicals at the work
place

I. Ingestion of lead paint as an infant

J. Domination by others

K. Fears and phobias

L. Physical ailments and all diseases

(1). Car accidents

(2). Employment accidents

XVIII. Cultural or Race Related Issues:

A. Consult with experts that can explain the mores

of the community or the societal dynamics of the defendant's life and background.

- (1) . Social scientists
- (2) . Mental health professionals
- (3) . Social justice activists
- (4) . Clergy
- (5) . Academicians
 - (1a). For example sociologists that study the Mariel Refugees
- (6). Labor leaders
- (7). Mental health professionals
- (8). Clergy that provide services to undocumented farm workers
- (9). Social workers
- (10). Drug counselors who deal with substance abuse and child abuse
- (11). Early childhood development specialists
- (12). Mental health advocates
- (13). Prison reform activists