

Response to Mr. Thomas Morton
Letter to Ohio's County Child Protective Service Directors
Dated 11/26/03

In a letter, dated 11/26/03, sent to Directors of Ohio's county child protective service agencies, Thomas D. Morton of the Child Welfare Institute accused the authors of *Issues in Risk Assessment in Child Protective Services* of disseminating the paper "as a transparent form of criticism of the four current pilots of the state's enhanced safety and clinical family assessment protocols." In this letter, Mr. Morton states, "Rycus and Hughes directly mock language and definition in materials prepared for the state's pilots."

Mr. Morton continues to misrepresent the paper's content and intent. The content of *Issues in Risk Assessment* was completed before the implementation of Ohio's safety and risk assessment pilots. Its major points were shared with ODJFS staff early in 2003. Given these realities, to suggest that this paper's goal was to "criticize" or "mock" Ohio's safety assessment protocol development is nonsense. What is of interest, however, is Mr. Morton's attempt to construe the authors as "critical" and "mocking."

The Institute for Human Services has a twenty-five year continuous history of working collaboratively with ODJFS, PCSAO, and county PCSAs in child welfare programming, practice, and training. It has been our privilege to have been a part of Ohio's development of this country's exemplary practice model and training program. We have the utmost respect for ODJFS and the county PCSAs' work, including ODJFS' recent activities regarding the federal Children and Family Services Review and Performance Improvement Plan. This is especially true of Ohio's choice to adopt the safety tool used in Michigan and many other states for implementation in Ohio. This safety protocol is backed by important research.

However, we do believe that risk and safety assessment in this country, and that includes Ohio, can be improved by using more rigorous research and evidence-based practice strategies. That is the thesis of *Issues in Risk Assessment in Child Protective Services*. It would be unfortunate if this paper's intent is misconstrued to serve selfish commercial interests.

It is our hope that ODJFS staff and county PCSA Directors and staff will read *Issues in Risk Assessment in Child Protective Services* and decide for themselves its merit and utility.

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