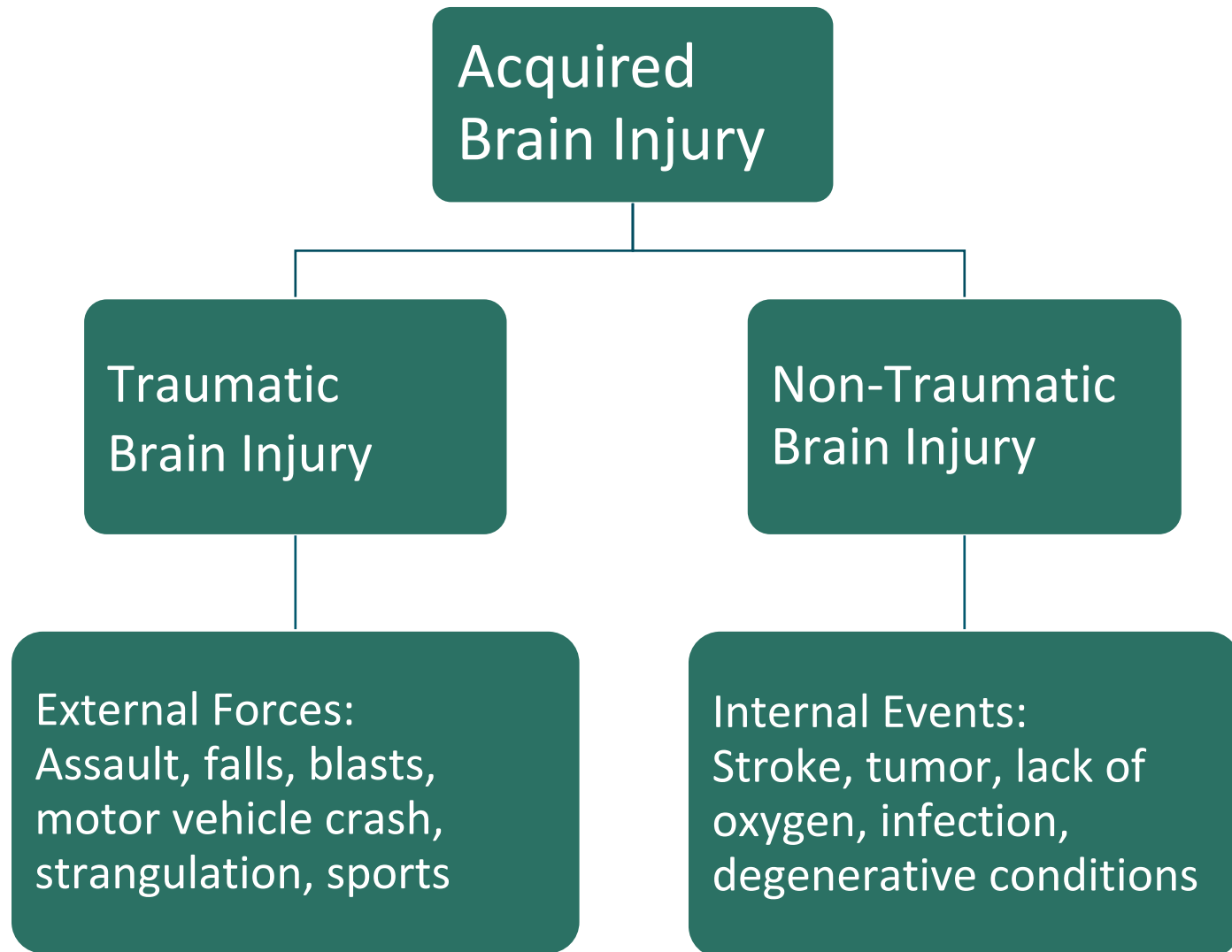


What Makes Brain Injury a Big Deal, Anyway?



What is a Brain Injury?



Possible Changes After BI



Physical

- Headaches
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Fatigue
- Seizures
- Mobility/Balance
- Speech
- Hearing/Vision
- Taste/Smell



Behavioral/Emotional

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Impulsivity/Risk Taking
- Social Inappropriateness
- Isolation/Inability to get along with others
- Irritability, Frustration
- Increased Self-Focus
- Before/After Contrasts



Cognitive

- Knowledge
- Attention
- Short-Term Memory
- Judgment
- Reasoning/problem solving
- Decision making
- Comprehension
- Production/Processing of language

How Do Emotional Changes Translate?

Injury-related problem	How it may affect a person functionally
Depression	Flat affect, lack of initiation, sadness, irritability.
Unawareness	Unable to take social cues from others.
Confabulation	“Making up stories.”
Perservation	Gets “stuck” on a topic of conversation or physical action.
Anxiety	Can exacerbate other cognitive/behavioral problems.



How Do Cognitive Changes Translate?

Injury-related problem	How it may affect a person functionally
Memory	Trouble following directions, providing requested information, making appointments.
Processing (receptive)	Understanding what is being said and reading.
Processing (expressive)	Trouble putting thoughts into words – tip of the tongue syndrome.
Problem solving (related to frontal lobe and temporal tip injury)	Impulsive, easily frustrated, sexually disinhibited, verbally/physically combative, interpersonally inflexible, poorly organized.



Effects of Substance Use on BI Recovery

- ▶ Substance use can hinder the healing process during early recovery
- ▶ Individual may have less motivation and/or social support to follow through with recovery efforts
- ▶ Substance use increases the risk of another TBI
- ▶ Increases effects of symptoms of TBI: problems with coping, memory, coordination, mood regulation, problem solving, social skills, fatigue and sensitivity to stimulation
- ▶ Adds stress to family and support system



Some Brain Injury and Mental Health Basics

- 75% of the people seeking services for concurrent MH and SUD are living with the effects of brain injury.
- If you work in MH setting: $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of all the people you serve report a history of BI with loss of consciousness.
- In MH settings: 1 out of five people for SUD treatment also living with BI
- Between 23-51% of adolescents and adults with TBI intoxicated at time of injury
- 25% hospitalized for TBI have history of SUD

Emotional/Behavioral Impact of Executive Function Affects Treatment

1. BI can cause gap between intentions and abilities.
2. Efficient cognitive processing relies on healthy brain connections. Signs associated with impaired functioning include:
 - Poor follow-through with goals and intended behavior.
 - Failure to learn through experience.
 - Difficulty setting realistic goals.
 - Trouble recognizing how their behavior affects outcomes.
3. Difficulty reading others' social cues may occur after TBI.
4. Difficulties with emotional regulation are result of impairments of frontal lobe damage

Source: Traumatic Brain Injury and Substance Use Disorders: Making the Connections

Why Connect the Dots- Brain Injury & Other Challenges?

- ▶ Brain Injury – common, but often undiagnosed co-occurring, chronic condition
- ▶ Brain Injury – invisible disability - easy to miss and to misunderstand
- ▶ Brain Injury – **more often than not** - co-occurring mental health and/or substance use disorders
- ▶ Brain Injury – **more often than not** – intimate partner violence related.
- ▶ Most successful approach to care will address needs related to all conditions rather than one or a few.
- ▶ ***Knowing about and treating the whole individual increases success***

Big Problem With Simple Solutions



At the end of the Day...

Clients are likely to need some support to...



Understand
the impact of
brain injury and
substance use



Remember
what to do and
when



Make
decisions and
set clear goals



Make plans
and problem-
solve

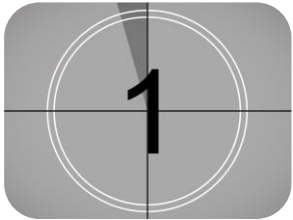


Get started
starting



Keep track
of goals and
evaluate
progress

Tangible Solutions



Train on
brain injury



Screen for
brain injury



Screen for
related
impairment



Adjust
supports to
address
impairment



Refer to
community
supports

Why Is Screening Important?

1. Uncovers lifetime history of brain injury
2. Helps determine program eligibility
3. Helps provider understand how to work with individuals with BI
4. Helps individual understand background of injuries and impact to current function




Iowa Code

- ▶ 225C.23 **Brain injury recognized as disability.** The department of human services, the Iowa department of public health, the department of education and its divisions of special education and vocational rehabilitation services, the department of human rights and its division for persons with disabilities, the department for the blind, and all other state agencies which serve persons with brain injuries, shall recognize brain injury as a distinct disability **and shall identify those persons with brain injuries among the persons served by the state agency.**

NASHIA OBISSS





Online Brain Injury Screening and Support System

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THE OBISSS OFFERS:

1

FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION

A tool that can be self-administered or completed with the help of a professional

2

RISK ASSESSMENT

Determines lifetime exposure to brain injury (both non-traumatic and traumatic); the OBISSS DOES NOT take the place of a diagnosis or medical findings

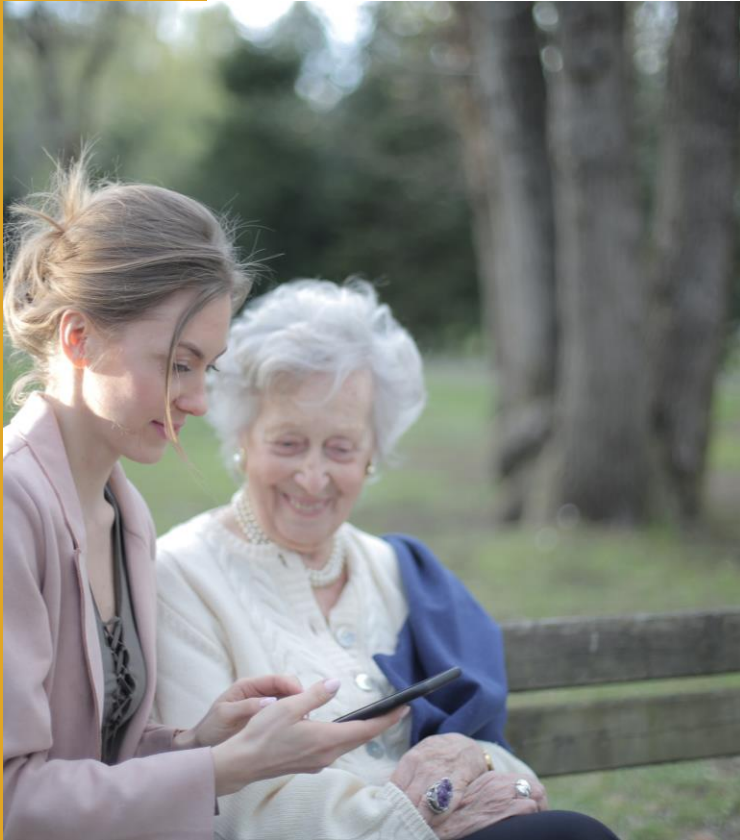
3

NEXT STEPS

If lifetime exposure to brain injury is present, the OBISSS then helps identify associated challenges that may be present.

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THE OBISSS USES:

VALIDATED AND RELIABLE
TOOLS

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
TBI-IDENTIFICATION METHOD
(OSU TBI-ID)

SYMPTOMS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
BRAIN INJURY (SQBI),
ADULT AND YOUTH VERSIONS

4

Strategies for Impulsivity/ Ways to Think Before Acting

Impulsivity is the conscious or unconscious inability to suppress or refrain from engaging in an action or thought. Impulsive behaviors are unplanned, may be risky or dangerous, and are often carried out without thinking about the consequences. Individuals with impulsivity challenges may appear inconsiderate, thoughtless, or sensation seeking. They may have difficulty following instructions when completing tasks, may interrupt others when speaking, or may dominate conversations in both individual and group settings. The use and repeated practice of the following suggestions can be helpful:

1. If the participant appears distracted or unfocused, you can use a grounding exercise to return their attention to the room. For example, ask the participant to describe the chair they are sitting in (or some other small object from the room) in great detail for 60 seconds. Have them tell you about the texture, shape, temperature, and physical features of the chair or object.²¹
2. Make paper available during meetings and encourage the participant to write down their comments and questions instead of blurting them out. Encourage them to use this practice to avoid talking out of turn. Repetition and reinforcement will build the skill and make it consistent over time.²²
3. To minimize conversational disruptions in group settings, ask the participant to silently repeat question(s) to themselves before offering an answer.²³
4. Breathing techniques can help to relax or de-escalate the participant when they are feeling out-of-control. A simple exercise that you can do with the participant is have them focus on their breathing for 60 seconds. Instruct the participant to breathe in through their nose, hold their breath for 6 seconds, and then breathe out through their mouth.²⁴
5. When giving the participant any assignment, prompt them to create a checklist or write down step-by-step instructions to take home with them.²⁵
6. You can use brief mindfulness exercises during your meetings to help the participant fight off urges that may be caused by stress. For example, use the "Five Senses Exercise" and have the participant do the following: find five things in the room that you can see; find four things in the room that you can feel; notice three things in the room that you can hear; identify two things in the room that you can smell; focus on one thing in the room that you can taste.²⁶
7. Poor sleep can contribute to impulsivity. You can review the attached sleep checklist with the participant to help promote better sleep habits.

Compiled by E. Halbert, K. Janicke, & T. Morgan March 11, 2019.

²¹ Farrell, D., & Taylor, C. (2017). The teaching and learning of psychological trauma – A moral dilemma. *Psychology Teaching Review*, 23(1), 63-70.

²² LaCount, P., Hartung, C., Shelton, C., & Stevens, A. (2018). Efficacy of an organizational skills intervention for college students with ADHD symptomatology and academic difficulties. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 22(4), 356–367.

²³ Colorado Department of Education. (2018). *Brain injury in children and youth: A manual for educators*. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education.

²⁴ Hoffman, S. G., & Gómez, A. F. (2017). Mindfulness-based interventions for anxiety and depression. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 40(4), 739-739.

²⁵ Colorado Department of Education. (2018). *Brain injury in children and youth: A manual for educators*. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education.

²⁶ Ackerman, C. (2019). 22 mindfulness exercises, techniques, & activities for adults. Retrieved from <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities/mindfulness-interventions-techniques-worksheets>.

4

Ways to Think Before Acting

Impulsivity is when you find it hard to think before you act or say something. You might notice yourself cutting someone off before they finish talking or doing the first thing that comes to mind. You may also find it hard to control your emotions and show them in a way that others will understand. Even though these behaviors are not on purpose, it can be frustrating if you find yourself getting in trouble for your actions. Using and practicing the following suggestions can be helpful:

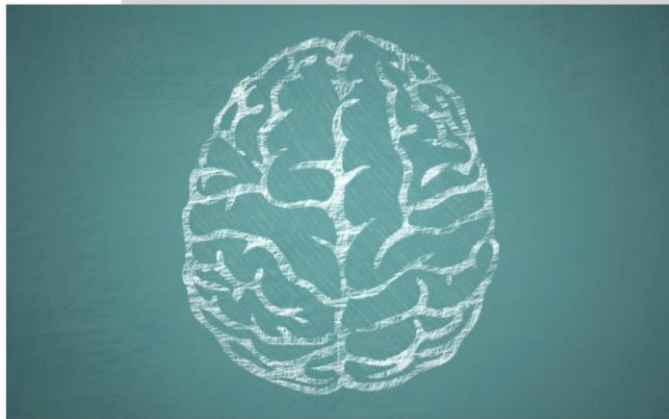


1. Stop → Think → Act! When you notice yourself acting on the first thing that pops into your mind, STOP and count to 3 while you think about the possible outcomes of what you are about to do before you do it.
2. Breathing techniques can help you relax when you are feeling out-of-control. A simple exercise that you can do is focus on your breathing for 60 seconds. Breathe in through your nose, hold your breath for 6 seconds, and then breathe out through your mouth.
3. Wait until others have finished talking before sharing your thought. If you find yourself disrupting conversations, try silently repeating the question(s) to yourself before offering an answer. This can help you avoid cutting others off when they are speaking.
4. If you find it hard to stay focused in any setting, physical or mental breaks can help. For example, try going for a short walk to take a break and refocus.
5. When working with others in a group setting, bring a notepad with you to write down your thoughts as they pop into your head. This can help avoid any interruptions that may have been caused by speaking out of turn.
6. Write down step-by-step instructions or create a checklist to help yourself complete tasks or instructions.
7. Poor sleep can contribute to impulsivity. You can review the attached checklist for better sleep to help promote better sleep habits.

Compiled by E. Halbert, K. Janicke, & T. Morgan March 11, 2019.



Professional Guidebook: Strategies for Managing Brain Injury Challenges in Adults



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF STATE HEAD INJURY
ADMINISTRATORS

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- 1 Strategies for Memory Challenges/Ways to Remember Information
- 2 Strategies for Delayed Processing/Ways to Understand Information
- 3 Strategies for Challenges with Attention/Ways to Help with Attention
- 4 Strategies for Impulsivity/Ways to Think Before Acting
- 5 Strategies for Physical and Sensorimotor Challenges/Ways to Manage Physical and Sensory Changes
- 6 Strategies for Language Challenges/Ways to Understand and Use Language
- 7 Strategies for Organizational Challenges/Ways to Organize Time and Activities
- 8 Strategies for Mental Flexibility Challenges/Ways to Think and Respond
- 9 Strategies for Emotional Dysregulation/Ways to Manage Emotions
- ✓ Checklist for Better Sleep

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Real World Application

BRAIN INJURY RESOURCE FACILITATION CHILD WELFARE PILOT PROJECT

A PILOT PROJECT IN 7 IOWA COUNTIES TO REDUCE OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS AND TERMINATIONS OF PARENTAL RIGHTS BY:

Teaching child welfare professionals how to include neurocognitive strategies in case permanency plans to compensate for the effects of brain injury so caretakers are able to successfully complete court ordered services

SUPPORTING BRAIN INJURY INFORMED SYSTEMS

- Screen for brain injury
- Assess functional changes
- Provide supports for strategy development or accommodations
- Access brain injury training
- Refer for brain injury resource facilitation services



UNDIAGNOSED OR MISDIAGNOSED BRAIN INJURY MAY RESULT IN...

- Individuals being labeled as non compliant or resistant
- Reduced effectiveness of services or treatment
- Make it more difficult to engage in services

BRAIN INJURY CAN IMPACT FUNCTIONING SOMEONE WITH BRAIN INJURY MAY HAVE CHALLENGES

- Attending to tasks or responsibilities
- Navigating complex instructions or systems
- Following procedures
- Navigating health and safety concerns
- Memory and organizational challenges
- Understanding information provided by others including clinicians, courts and child welfare system
- Impulse or behavior management



SOMEONE WITH BRAIN INJURY IS MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE

- Substance use disorders
- Mental health disorders
- Criminal justice involvement
- Housing insecurity

"Separating a child from their parent(s) has detrimental, long term emotional and psychological consequences that may be worse than leaving the child at home."

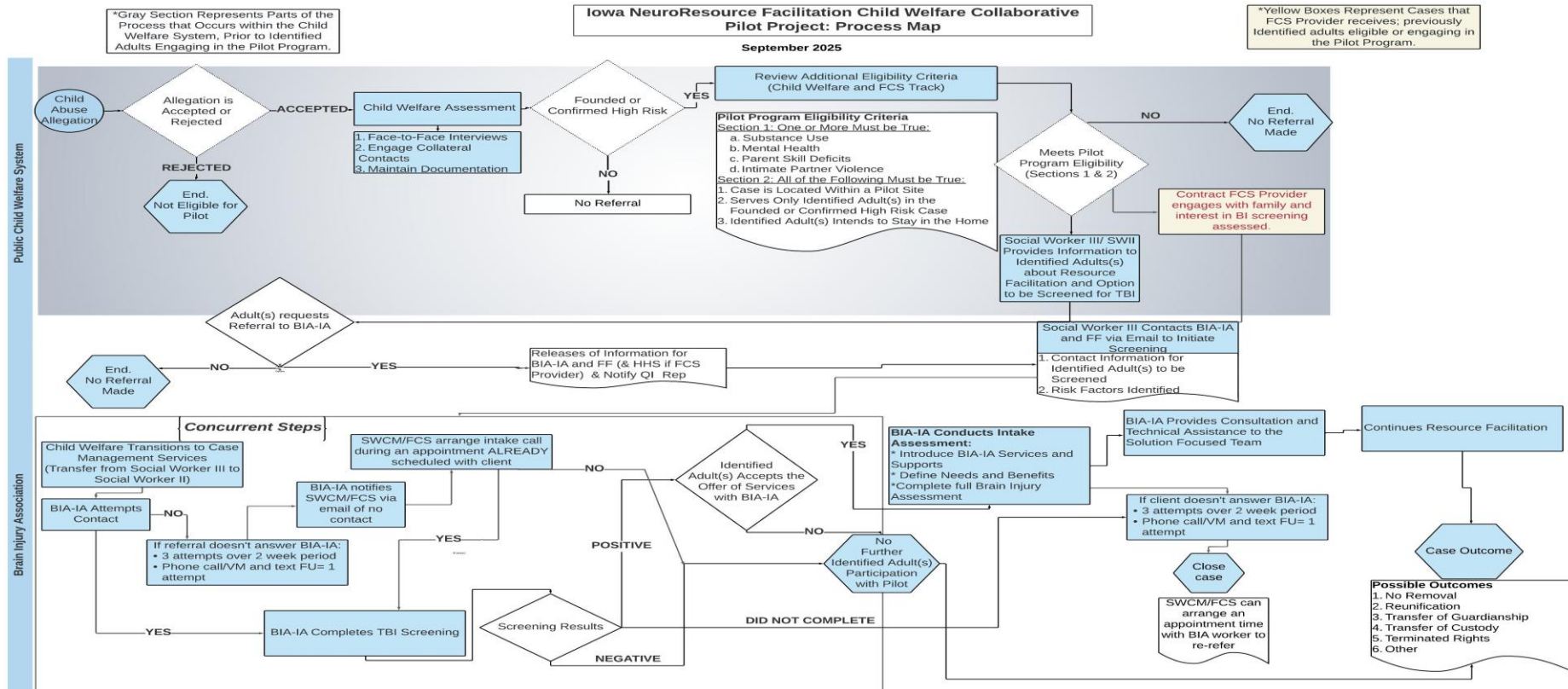
Shanta Trivedi, 2019
University of Baltimore College of Law

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Updated July 2025



Real World Application



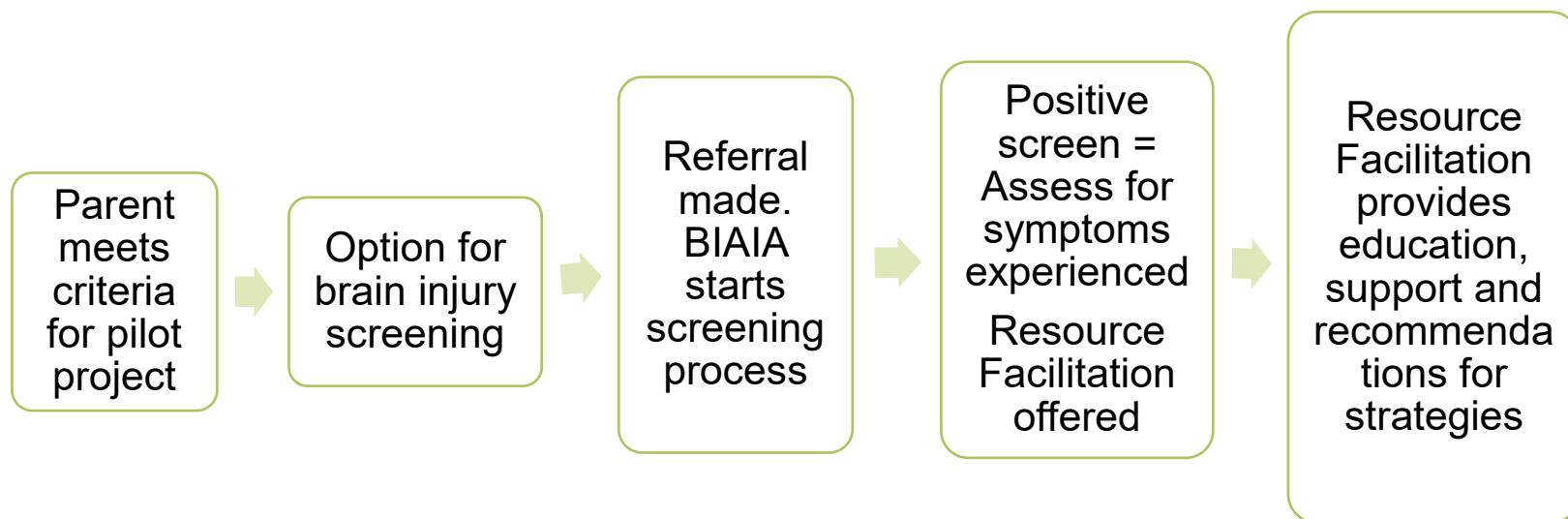
Designed by Schueller, A., Quan, N. & Richardson, B. (2021).
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Health and
Human Services

Case Example



WHO TO CONTACT



IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN USING THE SYSTEM
OR WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Brain.injury@hhs.iowa.gov

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Questions?

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