



Laurie

Laurie is nine. She is in her third foster home after having disrupted from an adoption. You are her caseworker. The case was recently transferred to you, and you have just met Laurie. You know her foster mother, Jean Wilson, however. When you called Jean to tell her you had been assigned to the case, she said "Boy, am I glad to hear from you! I don't know what to do with this kid." Jean also told you Laurie's teacher had called and was having difficulty with Laurie in school.

You have gathered the following information from the case record, previous foster families, Jean, and the teacher. It is your job to develop a case plan for Laurie and to help Jean and the teacher manage Laurie in a way that helps resolve her problem, preserves the placement, and promotes more healthy development.

Laurie was born to a 17-year old girl who abandoned her at a neighbor's when Laurie was one year old. At that time she was functioning at a six to eight month old developmental level. There was no evidence of abuse, but it appeared Laurie had been chronically and severely neglected. She was placed in a foster home.

During the following year in foster care, she developed well and eventually closed most of the gaps between her chronological age and her developmental age. She was placed for adoption at age two.

The adoption disrupted a year and a half ago because the adoptive parents felt they could "never really get close to Laurie." She has lived in three foster homes since that time. The first foster family requested that Laurie be removed after five months. Her second foster family moved out of state, but the placement was not going well and was expected to disrupt. Jean agreed to take Laurie to stabilize placement. Jean is a flexible, affectionate, and patient woman who has worked with difficult children in the past. However, "something about Laurie" confounds her.

Laurie exhibits the following behavior patterns.

- When she is first placed in a foster home, she is "superficially compliant." After several months the foster parents describe her as "sneaky."

- Jean found piles of deteriorating food hidden in Laurie's closet. She became angry because of the unsanitary condition and patiently explained this to Laurie. Two weeks later she again found rotting food, this time in the bureau drawers. She doesn't understand this, as Laurie can get anything she wants from the kitchen any time she wants.
- Laurie does not sleep well. She cries out in her sleep, and sleepwalks.
- Laurie is enuretic and wets the bed several times a week. She often "forgets" to change her bedding, and will pull the covers over the wet sheets.
- She loves to help Jean in the kitchen, but is not reliable about completing her routine chores. She wants to be involved in activities, but is easily discouraged and gives up when they don't go exactly right. She seems to lose interest in many activities quickly.
- Laurie is in constant conflict with her foster siblings. She tries to participate in games, but demands that she be the center of attention and cannot share or take turns. When the game does not go her way, she becomes totally disruptive.
- She has low frustration tolerance. When confronted by events that would be only mildly annoying to most 9-year olds, Laurie becomes totally enraged and throws screaming tantrums, slams doors, throws objects, and kicks furniture and people.
- Laurie takes other people's belongings and hides them, and then forcefully denies having taken them. Jean thinks Laurie may be taking change off her husband's dresser.
- Jean says Laurie completes her school papers, but they are often carelessly done, messy, and at times, unreadable. She is below grade level in most subjects, and doesn't like school. She does well in reading. The school psychologist says she has average intellectual potential, with a measured full-scale IQ of 102. He noted no learning disabilities or attention deficit disorder.
- She is disruptive in class. She is frequently out of her seat without permission, she persistently approaches the teacher for attention, she races to volunteer for any and all projects, and she bothers other children who are trying to work. She cannot attend to school work for more than a few minutes at a time.

- At recess, Laurie prefers to play with the first grade children. She can be bossy and argumentative with them. She does not get along with her classmates, who see her as a pest and "weird." She is always chosen last by classmates to be on a team, and the children often complain to the teacher that "she'll just mess things up for us."
- The teacher has told Jean that "Laurie just seems to need more love." The teacher reports that Laurie has told her many times how the foster parents seem to prefer their own children to her. Once she complained that everyone in the family had been given new sweatshirts except her. The teacher responded by buying Laurie a sweatshirt. Jean later told the teacher that none of the children had been bought sweatshirts, and that Laurie was lying to her.
- Laurie is indiscriminately affectionate with adults. She wants to hug and kiss the teacher every day, she often clings to the teacher, and she becomes jealous and upset when the teacher shows attention to the other children. When you met Laurie for the first time, she said "I'm glad you're my new caseworker. I just love to get new caseworkers," and climbed onto your lap.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Assess Laurie's development in all four domains. How do her behaviors reflect developmental delays and unresolved or poorly resolved developmental issues?
- 2) How would you suggest that Jean deal with the following problems? How would you explain why Laurie has these behavior problems? Remember, you want to help Laurie develop more normally and acquire age-appropriate skills at the same time you are managing her behavior. You also want to support Jean and her family and help to preserve the placement.
 - Hoarding food
 - Bed wetting
 - Stealing, taking other family members' belongings
- 3) How should the teacher deal with the following problems?
 - Seeking attention from the teacher

- Messy and incomplete homework papers, and performance below her grade level in academic subjects
- Lying to the teacher

4) What additional community resource services would you include in your case plan for Laurie? Identify possible resource agencies, and the types of services you would recommend. What kind of support would you provide to the foster parents?

Record ideas from your small group work here...