

Activity: Assessing School-Aged Children - Laurie

Laurie is ten. She is in her fifth foster home. The case was recently transferred to you. When you called Jean Wilson, Laurie's foster mother, she said "I don't know what to do with this kid!" You gathered the following information from the case record, previous foster families, Jean, and the teacher in preparation.

- When Laurie was one year old, her mother took her to the neighbor to be babysat for a few hours and never returned. At that time, she was functioning at a six-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 years in foster care she caught up with her physical developmental milestones. She was placed for adoption at age two, but her adoption was not finalized because after a year and a half her 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 challenging children in the past.
- Jean found a stash of deteriorating food hidden in Laurie's closet. Jean patiently explained to Laurie that this is unsanitary. Two weeks later she again found rotting food, this time in the bureau drawers. She does not 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. She is often tired during the day.
- Laurie wets the bed several times a week. She often does not change her bedding and will pull the covers over the wet sheets.
- Laurie loves to help her foster father in the kitchen but is not reliable about completing her routine chores of making her bed and dusting the living room. She wants to be involved in activities but is easily discouraged and gives up when they do not go exactly right. She loses interest in many activities quickly.
- Laurie has low frustration tolerance. When confronted by events that would be only mildly annoying to most 10-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.

- Laurie lies to avoid getting into trouble, which her caregivers understand; but also lies about seemingly random things which is harder to understand.
- Laurie is below grade level in most subjects and does not 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.
- Laurie is disruptive in class. She is frequently out of her seat without permission, she frequently 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 stay focused on 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."
- 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 immediately threw her arms around you said, "I'm glad you're my new caseworker, I love you!"