

Reunification Case Sample

Martha Delacorte – age 45; mother
Cynthia Delacorte – age 16; daughter, unknown father
Dennis Delacorte – age 10; son, unknown father
Michael Delacorte – age 3; son, unknown father

There are three children currently placed in two different foster homes. Dennis and Michael reside in the initial foster home placement, while Cynthia is currently placed in a second foster home, due to her behavioral issues in the initial placement. The children were removed from Martha's care due to an **Active Safety Threat** regarding present **Safety Factors** 5 and 7. Her **Protective Capacity** limitations at that time were not sufficient to control those present safety factors and each of the **Children's Vulnerability** to those factors. Martha was using intravenous heroin multiple times a day causing her to be incapacitated to parent her children several hours and days at a time. Martha was relying on Cynthia to provide much of the care and supervision for the younger children. Cynthia and Dennis had each missed over 40 days of school. Collateral interviews revealed multiple instances of the children being unsupervised for extended periods of time, outside of the home and “running the streets” until at least 11 pm. Cynthia was getting into fights at school and in the neighborhood. She had been suspended for fighting three times that school year. A neighbor had called the police with allegations Cynthia had assaulted her daughter.

All three children were initially removed by the police on emergency status. Police were called to the home on reports Cynthia and Dennis were outside throwing rocks at houses at 1:00 am. When police arrived at the home Cynthia and Dennis were still outside but denied throwing rocks. Police entered the home and found Martha passed out on a couch in a back room. Michael was found sleeping on the floor in another room. Police were unable to wake Martha for 30 minutes.

The family had recently moved to Ohio and there were no relatives or kin able to take them into their home. The children were placed in the same foster home while the caseworker continued to search for relatives as well as the identity of their fathers and any relatives connect to them.

Martha was linked with a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) assessment, which she completed. Martha was then referred to a 15-week Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) to address her heroin dependence. There is a waitlist for the IOP treatment; Martha began this treatment after the children had been in care for four weeks. Martha was referred for a mental health

assessment, which she completed. Martha was placed on medication to treat Bipolar Disorder with further recommendations she engage in individual counseling after completion of her IOP.

Cynthia's aggressive behavior continued to be problematic in care. Cynthia refused to engage in individual counseling. Despite her fighting and aggression issues, Cynthia continued to do well in school academically. The younger children flourished in foster care. There were some developmental concerns, especially for Michael. Michael was not speaking clearly and struggled with developmental milestones he had not reached. Dennis was refusing to engage in personal hygiene care and was developing rashes repeatedly. He was also behind grade level in reading. The foster parents worked closely with the children to improve these issues.

Visitation was set up for Martha and the children twice a week and was conducted at agency offices for the first 12 weeks of placement. During this visitation Martha had positive interactions with the younger two children. She was able to support the work the foster parents were doing with Dennis's reading and developmental exercises for Michael. Martha struggled with redirecting the children when they were acting out and became easily overwhelmed. Cynthia refused to attend several of the visits and would fight with Martha when she did attend the visits. Martha and Cynthia would often behave more like peers rather than caregiver and child. As the visits progressed, a parent mentor was linked to the case to assist Martha with some of the issues present during visitation. The parent mentor observed Martha to be "acting sleepy" during one of the visitations.

During week 13 of placement, the visitation was moved to Martha's home and was supervised by the parent mentor. The parent mentor worked with Martha on handling the children's behaviors in the home. The parent mentor noted Martha was progressing in her ability to parent, but still struggled at times with all three children. Cynthia continued to argue with Martha to the point of screaming during visitation. Supervised home visits occurred twice weekly for three weeks. Foster parents reported Michael's behavior tended to worsen when he returned home from visits. Foster parents reported he would be difficult to redirect and would often hit other children. Foster parents reported Dennis told them he had not eaten when he returned from one of the visits and that Martha had been "sleepy."

Martha continued to attend IOP sessions during this time. Martha tested positive for hydrocodone during week 7 of the IOP program but was forthcoming with her treatment provider about her relapse. Martha was screened by the IOP before her sessions. Martha was not being randomly screened. Martha's counselor reported Martha was progressing appropriately in the program and did not see the relapse as a big issue but a typical part of treatment.

After three weeks of supervised home visits, an overnight visitation was arranged. The parent mentor would supervise from 3p-6p and then the children would remain with Martha overnight. Cynthia went AWOL from the home during the overnight visit and was gone for three hours. Martha called the police to make a missing person's report. When Cynthia returned to the home, she and Martha got into a verbal fight. There were two more overnight visitations held following the same time pattern. Cynthia refused to attend the second overnight visitation but did attend the third overnight. Cynthia did not AWOL the home during this overnight visit. The parent mentor reported Cynthia and Martha largely ignored each other during the time she was present for the visit.

At the time of the potential reunification (~6 months in placement):

Martha continues to maintain housing. Martha gained employment at a convenience store and works 2nd shift. Martha reports she will attempt to switch her shift to first or third shift when she has completed IOP. Martha reports she will likely apply for child care assistance benefits from the state; however, she has not yet. The children will continue to receive medical cards and Martha has reapplied for food stamps in anticipation of the children's return.

Martha has completed 10 of 15 IOP sessions and has not tested positive for any substances in several weeks. Martha's counselor reports Martha has made good progress in her treatment. Martha had a no call/no show for one of the IOP sessions that occurred between the first and second overnight visitation. Martha reported to her clinician she had overslept.

Visitation continues to progress with the youngest two children. Michael's behavior has lessened when he returns from the visits. He has reported to his foster parents he just wants to go home with Martha. The parent mentor has some minor concerns with Martha's ability to handle the stress that will come with having all three children home. This is especially true for Cynthia due to her behaviors and their peer relationship.

Martha will continue her IOP program until completed. Once completed Martha will link with individual counseling that will eventually include Cynthia. Caseworker continues to attempt to engage Cynthia in individual counseling, but Cynthia continues to refuse.