

1 Emily

Background

Emily is a four-year-old girl, who lives in a suburban area with her mother and father. Her mother works at a local nursing home as a nurse's aide. Her father works as a mechanic in the body shop owned by his brother.

Her father admits to "having some problems with alcohol". When Emily was 2, he served a 6-month sentence in county prison for a DUI. Mother states, "he has anger problems, too"; she says that they have a difficult relationship, which she says includes physical and verbal violence, which Emily has witnessed. Parents both report that father has never hit Emily. Mother says "ever since he got back from jail, he's been very loud and gets angry over the littlest things." She also says, "He makes everyone feel like it's your fault – even Emily feels that way."

School/Daycare

Emily is currently not attending daycare, although her parents have enrolled her in a very good local daycare setting. She likes her teacher, but is very shy with the other children. She sometimes wanders around the classroom aimlessly, but most of the time she will play by herself or engage in activities if the teacher suggests it to her and supports her in getting into the group. She doesn't attend regularly – she refuses to come to daycare at least 2 days a week. Her parents report that "some days she gets so upset when we're trying to get her ready for school – insisting that she doesn't want to leave us - that we eventually give in and just let her stay home."

Home

Emily's mother reports "she's stubborn – she only wants to do what she wants to do and she doesn't want to eat – so mealtimes are always a strain – I have to actually coax her to eat."

Community

Emily has been found playing with fire in the bathroom three times in the last 3 months. Even though she has been told repeatedly by parents not to play with fire, mother reports "Emily just likes to do it – she finds matches in my purse, I guess and then goes in the bathroom and lights little pieces of tissue and then drops them in the trash can when she hears me coming. So far there hasn't been a big problem, but I worry that this behavior could cause real problems – she could get hurt or we could have a big fire."

Behavior Toward Others

Emily has a few friends – she enjoys playing with her cousin, who is about her age and has another friend who is the daughter of her mother's best friend. Most of the time they get along well, but she gets very upset when she doesn't get her own way – she withdraws, won't talk to anyone and stays upset for long periods of time – sometimes an hour or more, several times per week.

1 Emily (continued)

Moods/Emotions

Emily gets very upset when her parents argue and fight; she often then doesn't want to leave them to go to daycare and cries and begs them not to make her go – they give in about 2 days a week. She also says that she thinks they would not fight if it weren't for her and says "It makes me so sad - I wish I go away and be dead so you can be happy." They try to dissuade her from this kind of thinking, but she continues to repeat it.

Self-Harmful Behavior

Mother reports that Emily says she has a plan to "make myself be dead – I would jump up very close to the sun that would melt me and I would be dead and you would be happy."

Thinking/Communication

Emily is described by mother and daycare provider as: "she frequently appears to be just aimlessly walking around; not engaged in play or any other purposeful activity." Mother adds, "this doesn't happen most of the time, but frequently enough that we notice it."

Caregiver Resources: Material Needs

Mother states that "due to all the turmoil in the house, I don't always get to go shopping or get meals together and occasionally there are mornings when Emily doesn't get breakfast – they usually have something for at her at the day care, though – on the days I can get her to go"

Caregiver Resources: Family/Social Support

Mother states that she and father have a "difficult" relationship and admits that Emily has witnessed domestic violence in the home.

2 Marquis

Marquis is a 6-year-old boy who lives with his mother, grandmother and 3 siblings (ages 5, 8 and 10) in an urban area. Marquis attends first grade at a local elementary school. His mother is 27 years old, works two part-time jobs; she is often at work until midnight. His grandmother is home when Marquis and his siblings get out of school, but she is not in good health; she is partially blind and has Diabetes and High Blood Pressure. Marquis' father, is currently in jail serving a 5-10 year sentence. He has been in jail since Marquis was 4 years old. When Marquis was born, he and his mother and siblings lived at his grandmother's house, before her health began failing. His mother got her own house 3 years ago. Marquis never lived with his father, but his father was in his life until he went to jail.

School/Daycare

No real problems in school. He is getting A's, and B's and has fairly good attendance. His behavior is usually good; teacher reports that he occasionally is silly or inattentive in class, adding "honestly, his behavior is no worse than any other boy in the class – he does reasonably well at school."

Home

At home, he is fairly cooperative and gets along with his siblings pretty well, but grandmother reports that she has to watch him and prod him in order for him to do chores she assigns him.

Community

Marquis hangs around a group of boys – many who are older and part of a local gang who recently vandalized a local playground; their activities have in the past included other illegal acts. Marquis sometimes even runs errands or does favors for gang members.

Behavior Toward Others

Marquis was recently kicked out of a neighborhood playground & sent home after he was found to be threatening a younger child with a rough piece of wood with a nail sticking out of it.

Moods/Emotions

There are no problems in mood; Marquis sleeps and eats well and has no mood-related complaints; he is generally happy.

Self-Harmful Behavior

Marquis plays a lot of video games that involve death and killing; he talks a lot about wanting to die or killing himself - but says he doesn't want to actually be dead.

Thinking/Communication

No problems with thinking or communication are reported.

#2 Marquis (continued)

Caregiver Resources: Material Needs

Marquis's mother states that she has had a hard time providing everything her family needs, even though she is working two jobs. The house is old and requires repairs. Mother has gotten food stamps and is in touch with a local food bank, so adequate food in the house is assured. However, she is not always able to pay the gas and electric bills on time and frequently the gas and/or electricity has been shut off. This has been quite disruptive for Marquis, who can't get his homework done (and he is very proud of his good grades) at night with no lights and the lack of heat has been stressful to the point that Marquis says he doesn't want his friends or teachers to know about it.

Caregiver Resources: Family/Social Support

Marquis has a serious lack of consistent supervision after school and on weekends. Mother works, father is in jail and grandmother is in ill health. This has resulted in Marquis hanging out with older kids who are in a gang and has also resulted in Marquis having fights at the playground.

3 Imani

Background

Imani is a 5-year old girl who lives with her mother, father, older twin sisters (age 9) and baby brother (6 months). Mother stays at home with the baby, father works full-time managing a large manufacturing company. Imani is enrolled in a small day care center run by a woman in the neighborhood. Imani is healthy and is developing along age-appropriate lines – she is learning her numbers and letters and can write her own name. Mother states that the day care owner has expressed concern that Imani is not very verbally expressive while in her care. Mother says that Imani “has always been the quietest of the girls–she’s just naturally shy.”

She does concede that “sometimes Imani seems to withdraw into her own world – she’s very imaginative – so maybe she’s just preoccupied.” Mother also notes, “Imani’s never been a bundle of energy – she’s low-key.” At home Imani likes to play with puzzles and games; she also likes to help take care of her baby brother and is very helpful to mother - helping her to fold the baby’s clothes and pick up his toys.

School/Daycare

Imani attends regularly and is age-level in terms of her learning, according to daycare teacher (owner of the center). During the last parent conference at the center, parents were informed that although Imani is a very pleasant little girl, she is very quiet and speaks very little at daycare. She sometimes apparently fails to listen to the teacher; she then doesn’t follow the instructions given to the group and has to be spoken with individually, sometimes repeatedly. Teacher also told parents that Imani sometimes does not participate in activities with the other children, especially activities that involve verbal expression. Teacher points out that she is not concerned that Imani has a speech problem, she feels that Imani has difficulty expressing herself, although her speech and articulation are fine.

Home

Imani is well accepted by her family. Although she is quieter than her siblings, her parents report that she is compliant with bedtime routines, dresses herself in the morning, eats a variety of foods and sleeps well; she still takes a nap in the afternoon when she returns from daycare.

Community

Imani has few friends other than the children she plays with at daycare. She does go out into the community with her mother – grocery shopping and other errands. Mother reports, “Imani behaves very well when I take her with me and she seems to enjoy the outings.”

Behavior Toward Others

Imani is shy and quiet around others. She does play with the other children at daycare, especially during activities that involve building or making things. She is overly timid and does not participate easily in activities or games that involve verbal communication.

Moods/Emotions

Parents describe Imani as being “low-energy.” They described this as “not like she’s depressed or sad, but just not energetic. She is certainly loving to us and her siblings especially the baby, but she never actually seems delighted by anything or particularly happy even when things go very well for her.”

Self-Harmful Behavior

Mother has noticed that “sometimes when Imani is in one her withdrawn times”, she picks at any little loose skin she has – like a cuticle or a little scab or anything and just worries it to pieces – pulling and tugging – until it comes off.” This apparently has happened repeatedly, daycare teacher has noticed it as well and brought it to parent’s attention.

Thinking/Communication

Parents are not concerned about Imani’s thinking; they describe her as a “bright little girl who is imaginative.” They are somewhat concerned about the occasional problems Imani seems to have expressing herself verbally. They are aware that this is more of a problem for her than other children her age and have had her checked out by the pediatrician who found no speech problems.

Caregiver Resources: Material Needs

Imani’s material needs are well met.

Caregiver Resources: Family/Social Support

Imani’s family is warm and stable. She is well accepted by other family members and is well integrated into family life as a whole.

4 Wyatt

Background

Wyatt is a 5-year old boy who lives with his mother, father and five siblings (ages 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8). Family lives in a small farming community and are very involved with a very structured Christian church – they attend prayer meetings and bible study and the older children go the church school. Wyatt and his younger siblings stay home with mother. Wyatt was attending a daycare in town (the church does not offer pre-school or daycare), but had so many problems there that Wyatt was asked not to return and parents were referred to a special needs school. Mother says that she would rather take care of Wyatt at home, stating, “We love Wyatt and that is the most important thing. At home he can be with his family and just be himself. It is a lot for me when I’m home with him and all the rest of the children, but I do the best I can. I sometimes think Wyatt needs more than that. I don’t know.” Father says that while he is concerned about Wyatt, he says “I didn’t talk a lot when I was young, I think it’s just a phase he’s going through. I don’t know what else we can do to help him.”

School/Daycare

Wyatt was in daycare for about 1 year; 2 months ago he was asked to leave, after staff determined that they could not meet his rather extensive academic and behavioral needs. Prior to asking him to leave, Teachers reported, “Wyatt can go for days at a time without speaking to anyone. Some days he will talk to his main caregiver, but uses limited words and has to be prompted repeatedly throughout the day to use his words.” He was tested for speech problems, which did not reveal any articulation or pronunciation problems. Teacher added, “He makes an effort to participate in the learning his colors, numbers and writing, but he is far behind other children his age – about a year and a half.” He has great difficulty in socializing with his peers; he does not have any friends; he spends most of his time alone, arranging blocks and other items into intricate patterns.

Home

Wyatt is difficult to manage at home. He does speak “sometimes, when he has something to say”, reports mother. Often, though, he doesn’t speak and mother says, “I have to guess what he wants.” This is often frustrating for Wyatt and he gets upset, hitting mom, throwing things around the room; mother says “I don’t really leave him alone in the house, because of his tantrums.” Wyatt doesn’t have stable safety awareness – mother reports “sometimes he remembers not to touch the hot stove, and sometimes he reaches out for something on the stove if he wants it – I really have to keep a close eye on him”

4 Wyatt (continued)

Community

Wyatt has been inappropriate in daycare – he twice has pulled down his pants (both his jeans and underpants) during Reading Circle; teachers were able to intervene, escorting him to the bathroom to get re-dressed and telling him that this was not acceptable behavior; his parents were informed and report that they also have instructed Wyatt not to pull down his pants in public. Wyatt’s behavior was very disruptive to the other children and when parents were informed, several parents expressed concern for the safety of their children.

Behavior Toward Others

Parents and teacher both note that Wyatt doesn’t have any real interactions with his peers; he always plays alone and actively avoids playing with others, walking away or just sitting down and closing his eyes.

Moods/Emotions

Parents describe Wyatt as “usually pleasant, but not particularly demonstrative.” They say that he seems to enjoy being with his family, likes bedtime rituals (where he is read to and then tucked in by mother), but, in their words “is not the kind of child who gets very ‘down’ – and he never gets really ‘up’ about anything either – he has a hard time expressing strong feelings – he never goes as far as hating or loving anything or anybody – he’s just kind of limited emotionally.”

Self-Harmful Behavior

Parents both say that they watch Wyatt carefully and have never seen him do anything that would hurt himself.

Thinking/Communication

Parents and teachers agree that Wyatt can speak, with no articulation or pronunciation problems, but refuses to speak; parents say “it’s selective – he speaks when he wants to – but does not respond (verbally) just because you want him to.”

Caregiver Resources: Material Needs

Wyatt’s material needs are well met – the home is safe and warm and food is plentiful.

Caregiver Resources: Family/Social Support

Parents believe that they should be able to care for Wyatt at home, but acknowledge that they cannot help Wyatt with his learning problems, his limited speech and his behavioral problems; they acknowledge that that he is not developing as he should. They love and care for him and there is no issue of him being in any danger at this time.

5 Jasmin

Background

Jasmin is a 6-year old girl who lives in an inner-city neighborhood with her mother, grandmother and older sister (age 10). She attends kindergarten at the local public elementary school with her sister, who walks with her back-and-forth to school. Her mother is currently unemployed. Grandmother works at the local convenience store. Mother reports, "her father died of a drug overdose when Jasmin was two years old." Mother says, "we're only living with my mother because I lost my job last year – we don't actually get along that well – she gets irritated with me because I'm not working, but I'm bi-polar and it's not that easy." Mother states, "I used to be in therapy, but I can't afford that now." She adds, "They used to give me medication, but I don't need it anymore." Mother states, "Jasmin is basically a good kid, but some of the things she does really aggravate me. I try to not be in the same room with her – she wants all of my attention, all of the time."

At School

Jasmin enjoys kindergarten and recently brought home her report card showing that she is making good progress in all academic subjects. Teacher did note that Jasmin forgot to put up her book bag before class a few times, until teacher reminded her; teacher wrote "now Jasmin is the one child who always puts her things up and helps other children to put their bags and coats away."

At Home

Jasmin is usually compliant and does what mother asks her to do, including keeping her toys picked up and picking up her dirty clothes and putting them in the hamper. Mother does report that Jasmin gets upset if mother is in the house and not paying attention to her. Mother says, "If her sister and I are watching a TV show together, Jasmin will try to get between us on the couch or she will get upset and pout." Mother is very irritated by this behavior; however mother admits that "Jasmin doesn't do this very often and it's not really a big deal – I just don't like it and no patience for it. It makes me want to be around her less." Grandmother reports that she once found Jasmin with a pack of matches, striking one which quickly went out. Grandmother said, "I told her in no uncertain terms not to play with them – that fire is dangerous. Then, the very next day, there she is again lighting another match - I snatched the matches away and sent her for a time out." This was about 2 months ago; there has been no repeat of this activity.

Friendships

Jasmin has friends at school and in the neighborhood – she is well liked and generally happy.

Feelings

Jasmin sometimes says she feels sad or anxious, but there are no reports of this being a frequent occurrence. She sleeps well, except for nightmares 1-2 times per week. Her eating is normal and her concentration and energy level are good, according to mother and grandmother.

Self-Harmful Behavior

Jasmin has no nervous habits nor has she displayed any behavior or made any statements that would lend concern about self-harm.

Thinking/Communication

Jasmin has no reported problems in thinking, communication or memory.

Caregiver Resources: Material Needs

Jasmin's home is safe and secure and there is no shortage of food or other material needs.

Caregiver Resources: Family/Social Support

Mother is easily irritated by Jasmin's desire to be with her; mother admits that she is "stand-off-ish" with Jasmin because she doesn't "get" her. Mother says she doesn't have this problem with Jasmin's older sister. Grandmother states, "other people, including me, provide Jasmin with a lot of love and affection, but that doesn't stop her from wanting it from her mother, which mostly does not happen."

6 Brandon

Background

Brandon is a 4-year old boy who lives with his father in an apartment in an urban area. Brandon attends daycare. His father is 23 and works Monday through Friday on a 9-5 schedule; Brandon's daycare is located nearby, about halfway between their home and father's workplace. Brandon's mother is a 22 year-old woman who abandoned her family when Brandon was 18 months old. Father reports that he and mother had an intense but sometime tumultuous relationship, with numerous breakups and reunions. Since Brandon was born, the couple had been living together although father says that "we didn't always get along very well and sometimes she would take off for a few days or a week – she would get so frustrated about everything – but she would come back and things would be better for a while. She was always good with the baby – she loved him and took really good care of him when she was here." When Brandon was a year and a half, mother said she couldn't do it anymore – she wanted to go far away and start a new life and then she left for good. Father says "I hear from her sister once in a while that she's ok, but other than that, she doesn't have any contact with either me or Brandon."

School/Daycare

Brandon clings to his father every day at drop-off and cries loudly for up to an hour or more when father leaves. He stays highly upset throughout the day – crying frequently. His behavior is highly disruptive to the daycare classroom; the teacher must spend an inordinate amount of time with Brandon – soothing and consoling him. The owner of the daycare has come in to help the teacher with strategies and plans to help Brandon and to minimize the disruption to other children in the class. Father sometimes leaves work early to pick Brandon up – so does grandmother. He leaves school (sometimes as early as 10am) at least once a week. Brandon is bright and can spell his name, recite the alphabet (with some help) and knows his colors.

Home

For the first year after mother left, paternal grandmother (who only worked part-time) was able to take care of Brandon while father worked during the week. When Brandon was about 2 ½, grandmother's job requirements changed – she had to travel for work and she was no longer able to take care of him full-time. Father found a reputable daycare program nearby which accepted Brandon and was able to provide very good care, working around father and grandmother's schedules. Brandon has become very demanding – gets very upset – crying inconsolably if something doesn't go his way. For the past two months, he refuses to get dressed independently, even though father says that he has been picking out his own clothes and getting himself dressed since he was "about 2". Father says "getting him dressed is a battle almost every day – I pick out a shirt, he throws it on the floor. I put on his socks, he takes them off. It can take half an hour."

6 Brandon (continued)

Community

Father does not report any problems with children in the neighborhood other than Brandon mostly plays by himself.

Behavior Toward Others

Daycare staff reports that Brandon plays or works alone even when other children would like him to join them or there is a group activity – he clearly would rather be alone. At home, father notes that Brandon prefers to play alone, even when cousins or other children his age are around – “he gets along OK with them” his father says, “and will sometimes play with them, but often plays alone – he seems to prefer it that way.”

Moods/Emotions

Father says that “almost every day” when he drops Brandon off at daycare, he cries and sobs; teacher reports that Brandon stays highly upset throughout the day – crying frequently. Teacher adds “sometimes there seems to be no reason for the tears, but he cannot be consoled – he just seems to need to go through it until he’s done.”

Self-Harmful Behavior

Father notes that Brandon bites his nails and cuticles “down to the quick” – saying “he always is biting on his fingernails or tearing off any little bits of skin.” Father is worried about this, saying “It seems like he’s nervous or upset or something. It’s not really bad, but I worry if it gets worse it would get infected or make a scar.”

Thinking/Communication

Father does not report any thinking or communication problems, other than Brandon mostly plays by himself. He likes to draw and color, but has to be supervised in this activity because he frequently chews his pencils or crayons –he bites the erasers off of pencils and swallows them. If allowed to play with chalk, he will eat bits of chalk “like they were candy”.

Caregiver Resources: Material Needs

Although Brandon’s mother left the family several years ago father and paternal grandmother have been able to provide a stable home; father and son live in 2-bedroom apartment which is well furnished and is in a relatively safe neighborhood. Brandon’s material needs are well met.

Caregiver Resources: Family/Social Support

Grandmother continues to play an active part in Brandon’s supervision and support. Father devotes much of his time and energy to providing his son a loving, safe environment in which he is cared for and protected.