

Kate, Denny and Pam

Mother: Mary, age 30, Caucasian (Divorced from David)
Father: David, age 31, Caucasian (Divorced from Mary)
Children: Kate, age 11, Caucasian
Denny, age 8, Caucasian
Pam, age 5, Caucasian
Boyfriend: Jerry, age 26, Caucasian (living with Mary and children)

Presenting Situation

At her pre-school, Pam usually played alone and rarely talked to other children. This day, she was observed rubbing her own genitals. She then touched a boy's genitals and kissed him. The teacher who witnessed the behavior stopped her. Pam appeared unashamed of her behavior and made no attempt to hide it. The teacher attempted to call Pam's mother, Mary, about the incident, but could not reach her. She planned to tell Mary when she came to pick up her daughter, but two hours later, Pam was seen exhibiting sexualized behavior - getting on top of a second boy. The teacher questioned Pam, who seemed unaware she had done anything wrong. The director of the pre-school decided to make a report to the Department of Human Resources (DHR). A DHR social worker came to interview Pam, but could elicit no specific responses from Pam. The social worker contacted Mary and arranged a meeting at the local Child Advocacy Center (CAC) for later that afternoon. During the interview at the CAC, Pam revealed that her brother, Denny, had asked her to perform oral sex on him. Mary appeared shocked by the news.

Current Situation

After the interview at the CAC, the social worker visited the family in their home. Mary and her children reside in a mobile home park. Mary's boyfriend, Jerry, also lives in the home. The conditions of the two bedroom mobile home are acceptable. Mary and Jerry occupy one bedroom, the two girls occupy another bedroom, and Denny sleeps on a couch. During the home visit, the caseworker observed that pornographic video tapes and magazines were left on the table and a shelf in the living room. Mary reported that Jerry often watches the children at home while she works. When asked about the pornography, Jerry admitted watching pornographic videotapes and reading pornographic magazines while baby-sitting but stated "The kids don't understand what it is". Mary agreed with his comment. Also, he also admitted to drinking beer while baby-sitting while the children play "around the trailer park".

In interviews with the children, the social worker finds that the children communicate no fear of Jerry and sometimes refer to him as "Daddy". Kate indicates she thinks Jerry is "cool" because he lets go her out with neighbor children at night. She states she likes to be out of the house at night because she hears Jerry and her mother having sex through the walls.

A decision was made by the Department to remove the children from the home based on concerns that the children were being exposed to sexually explicit material and behavior. The children were placed together in a traditional foster home.

The children appear to be physically healthy and attend school on a regular basis. Kate and Denny are at their proper grade levels.

In a forensic interview shortly after the children were removed from the home, Pam disclosed to the interviewer that "Denny touched my peepee a bunch of times for a long time". She reported that she thinks the first time might have been when she went to kindergarten. The forensic interviewer states that, based on interviews with Denny and Pam, she does not believe they have been sexually abused by an adult. She does believe that they both have repeatedly seen pornographic material, as well as, observed Mary and Jerry having sex.

Background Summary

Mary grew up in a rural town. She disclosed little about her childhood, claiming that it was "nothing special." At 18, she married her high-school sweetheart. Mary said she was anxious to get out of her parents' home to be on her own, and she thought marriage was the way to accomplish this. She never felt close to her parents but denied abuse by them. Her husband was the breadwinner and she was a housewife. She gave birth to their three children: Kate, Denny, and Pam. She believed her marriage was as happy as most she knew of and was surprised when eventually her husband had an affair leading to their divorce four years ago.

Mary's ex-husband, David, has married a woman who has a teenage son. David is raising the step-son but has very little to do with his own children. Kate, Denny, and Pam visit David, but not often. Mary reports the children do not "get along" with his step-child very well. Mary states David sometimes buys Pam, Denny, and Kate inexpensive things but nothing that is really needed. He does not pay child support. Mary insisted, however, that all three children have "grown up fine." She could not recall any reason or event that might be the cause of Denny and Pam's sexualized behavior. Mary works at various shifts at a fast-food restaurant and as a part-time maid in a local motel. The family budget is very tight, and she often is behind on some bills. Mary receives no child support from the children's biological father, and the family is not on TANF. However, they do receive food stamps and are enrolled in Medicaid.

Mary and Jerry met about one year ago while he was living at the hotel where she works as a maid. They began living together almost immediately. This is her first serious relationship since the divorce.

Jerry grew up in a large city, the middle child of five siblings. He revealed that he was molested by a stranger when he was seven years old. His sister found out about the abuse and told their parents. The perpetrator was arrested and Jerry attended counseling. Jerry believes that Denny might have been molested by a stranger. Jerry has a four-year-old daughter from a prior relationship, but he is not allowed to visit her unsupervised; he is vague about why. Also, he does not pay child support for his daughter. He graduated from high school and trained to be a chef. However, he currently is self-employed, working sporadically in jobs such as roofing or painting. He admitted that he occasionally uses marijuana and drinks beer every day.

Safety Issues

- There may be on-going sexual abuse in the home.
- Denny and Pam are potential risks to other children at home, in their neighborhood, and at school.
- The children are exposed to sexualized behavior at home.
- The children are not sufficiently supervised at home.

Strengths

- Mary loves her children.
- Mary is employed.
- The children have medical coverage and are presently healthy.
- The children attend school.
- Jerry has professional skills as a chef.
- Kate and Denny perform academically at their correct grade levels.
- The family has adequate transportation.

Needs

- All of the children need to be safe from further abuse and neglect through adequate supervision by their mother and/or other caregivers.
- Jerry needs to store his inappropriate magazines and movies where the children cannot have access to them. Jerry needs to be sober when caring for the children.
- Jerry needs to find a permanent job.
- Jerry needs to contribute to the expenses in the household.
- Mary needs to secure a daytime job.
- Mary needs to expand her support network.
- Pam and Denny need specialized counseling for their sexualized behavior.
- Mary and Jerry need to learn appropriate boundaries.
- Mary needs to pursue child support from the children's biological father.

Available Resources

Most mobile homes in the mobile home park are occupied by low-income working families. The park is located in the rural part of the county, about fifteen miles from a city of 100,000 people. In the city are two hospitals, two mental health centers, several community service agencies, and specialized doctors. There are several denominations of churches. There are county and city schools as well as a community college. The paternal grandmother sometime visits the children and brings presents on holidays. The maternal grandmother sometime talks to Mary, but they are not close. Mary has some coworkers she can talk to, but they are not close friends.

Child Welfare Competency One Knowledge of Human Development

Case Scenarios

- A. Denny is hyperactive. He sometimes is withdrawn, sitting alone and staring at his peers. When he wants to play with them, he is always eager to please others. Pam is behind in her grade level. She avoids eye-contact and does not talk much. She often plays alone in kindergarten.
- B. Kate is upset about the relationship between Mary and Jerry. Kate wants to see her biological father and wants to live with him. Mom refuses Kate's request. Mary frequently talks negatively regarding David, but Kate retains a good relationship with him. Kate lacks social skills to relate to her peers. Kate wants to have friends at school, but she appears to be immature around her peers and drives them away. They avoid her and some ridicule her.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A., list what is known about each child. Then review a development tasks/behaviors chart and identify where each of the three children appear to be typical or atypical. (CWCD 1)
- Based on Case Scenarios A and B, discuss how sexual abuse or exposure to sexualized behavior may affect each child and how this might account for some of their behavior. (CWCD 1)

Suggested Resources

- Brittain, Charmaine and Deborah Hunt, Helping in Child Protective Services: A Competency-Based Casework Handbook, Oxford 2004, Chapter 8.

Child Welfare Competency Two Knowledge of Abuse and Neglect

Case Scenarios

- A. Denny discloses that Kate has performed oral sex on him for two years. He was scared at first about the oral sex, but now he likes it. He does not know how to make it stop. He does not tell Mary because she is never around. Kate bribes him with privileges. Also, he is allowed to do anything when Kate baby-sits him.

After Denny's disclosure, the social worker arranges a meeting for with the forensic counselor at the advocacy center. Kate initially denies the accusation and accuses Denny of lying, but eventually reveals that she and Mary had engaged in sexual activities several times since she was 7 years old. She claims no new incidents had happened for two years, and that Mary was very protective of her and affectionate to her until the mother met Jerry. Kate was angry about that relationship; she then sexually abused Denny.

The social worker interviews Mary about the allegations against her. Mary cries when she reveals her own traumatic experiences: She had been involved sexually with her own father since she was nine years old. Her mother was often sick and allegedly knew about it, but did not interfere. Moreover, Mary also had sexual relationships with her grandfather and her uncle, Jim. Because they lived in a small, rural town, she had no friends and stayed home most of the time. Her later divorce was very difficult for her and this is when she began sexual activities with Kate.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, write a paper on the cycle of abuse. Include discussion regarding: the effect of childhood abuse on adult relationships, the frequency in which victims become perpetrators, and interventions that can interrupt the cycle. (CWCD 2.2, 2.3)

Child Welfare Competency Three Knowledge of Services

Case Scenario

- A. During the course of counseling, it was discovered that Jerry has sexually abused Denny by fondling him and making him watch pornography. When interviewed regarding his abuse of Pam, Denny states, "I'm just playing like Jerry does."
- B. The decision is made that the children should be removed from the home for their safety. Kate has admitted sexually promiscuous behavior with boys in the neighborhood. It is known that Denny and Pam are acting out sexually.

Teaching Tools

- Based on case information and Case Scenario A, identify and research models for treatment of juvenile sexual offenders. Make a written recommendation regarding the appropriate treatment of Denny and why. (CWCD 3.1)
- Based on Case Scenario B, discuss the benefits and concerns regarding placing these siblings together or separating them. Role play a conversation between a social worker and foster parent regarding the potential placement of these children in their home. (CWCD 3)

Child Welfare Competency Four Knowledge of Policy

Case Scenario

- A. The social worker petitioned for removal of the children from the home and the court granted temporary custody to DHR. The children have been removed and placed separately in three foster homes.
- B. Mary talks to the children's paternal grandmother about taking custody of the children, which upsets the maternal grandmother. Both maternal and paternal grandmothers have filed petitions for custody of the children. The paternal grandmother knows about sexual abuse Mary suffered in childhood and claims that Mary's mother would not be an appropriate caregiver for the children.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, invite a DHR Foster Care Supervisor and Foster Parent to talk with class about policy on sibling placement, visitation, and efforts the agency makes to maintain the connections siblings have with each other and the community. (CWCD 4)
- Based on Case Scenario B, invite a juvenile court representative to discuss the process by which children are deemed dependent and the consequences of dependency. Write a court report based on the presenting information and case scenario making a recommendation to the Court regarding custody of the children. (CWCD 4)

Child Welfare Competency Five Knowledge of Systems Theory

Case Scenario

- A. The pastor of a new church nearby has reached out to Mary and Jerry. He visited the home and encouraged them to attend church services. Mary is very hesitant to expand her social circle considering her current family situation. Mary states, "My nosy neighbors are looking for something to talk about. I just know they are spreading rumors about all you DHR folks coming in and out!"

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, Mary has asked the social worker for advice regarding attending church. Role play a conversation between Mary and the social worker regarding the benefits and challenges of Mary and her family expanding their social circle at this time. (CWCD 5)

Child Welfare Competency Six Knowledge of Strengths Based Perspective

Case Scenario

- A. The social worker assigned to this case was sexually abused by her father for many years. Her mother was aware of the abuse and did not intervene. The supervisor notices that the social worker has very little patience for Mary and becomes easily frustrated with her. The supervisor has also overheard the social worker comment that Mary is "just not living up to expectations and probably never will".

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, discuss the challenges of finding strengths in clients when their actions put their children at risk. List ways in which strengths can be identified when faced with these challenges. (CWCD 6.1)
- Based on Case Scenario B., research Employee Assistance Programs. Is this worker appropriate for referral? Role play a conversation between the supervisor and the worker regarding this possibility.

Child Welfare Competency Seven Knowledge of Role of Social Work

Case Scenario

- A. After a comprehensive mental health assessment, it is determined that Denny should complete an in-patient juvenile sexual offender treatment program. At the in-patient facility, Denny attempts to run away the first week, fights with other patients, and curses at staff. The facility has contacted the social worker stating they believe Denny's scheduled visit with his mother should be cancelled as it only "exacerbates his rebellious behavior".
- B. Pam and Kate are placed in a foster home together. Kate has twice attempted to run away. Pam's behavior has regressed, and she has begun to carry a blanket, talk "baby-talk", wet the bed, and have nightmares. Mary verbalizes anger regarding the children's behavioral problems and has accused the foster parents of "doing something" to them. She is fearful that Pam will "never get over being ripped from her family".

Teaching Tool

- Based on Case Scenario A, write a paper regarding the role of the social worker as an advocate. Include a discussion of OHR visitation policy and a written plan on addressing the facility while following policy. (CWCD 7)
- Based on the Case Scenario B, list the roles of the social worker encountered in the scenario. Discuss the first step of addressing the situation. (CWCD 7)

Child Welfare Competency Eight Knowledge and Application of Evidence Based Practice

Case Scenarios

- A. A decision was made to place Denny in an in-patient juvenile sex offender treatment program. The social worker was committed to finding the most appropriate facility to meet Denny's needs. She researched treatment models and based her recommendation on empirical evidence of success.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, discuss ways to make treatment recommendations when empirical evidence and/or research on treatment models is limited. Explore methods in which social workers can apply evidence based practice when research is not readily available. (CWCD 8)

Child Welfare Competency Nine Understanding of Cultural Competence

Case Scenario

- A. Mary was raised in a prominent upper-middle class family. She was sexually molested by a neighbor at age eight. Mary disclosed this to her mother and father immediately. Her mother and father told her to never speak of it again. Mary believes her parents did not want to address molestation due to concerns that it would affect their status in the community.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, research the prevalence of sexual abuse in families. Outline the prevalence based on socio-economic and racial status of the victims. Discuss class preconceptions regarding who is sexually abused. Did research support their preconceptions or conflict with them? (CWCD 9.1)

Child Welfare Competency Ten Understanding of Crisis Intervention

Case Scenario

- A. Kate and Pam were placed together in a foster home two months ago. The foster parent has reported no concerns regarding their behavior or adjustment. On Friday at 4:00 PM, the foster parent calls insisting that the social worker pick-up Kate and Pam immediately. The foster parent states, "I am sick and tired of their constant bickering and fighting. I want them out of my house right now! You people at DHR never want to help me."
- B. Mary calls the social worker crying hysterically she states she is at the hospital with Jerry. He shot himself intentionally and may not live. She states, "It is all my fault. He did this because of my kids telling lies."

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, role play a conversation between the foster parent and the worker addressing the following:
 - Identify the crisis Identify the non-crisis issues
 - Identify possible outcomes to this situation that will alleviate the crisis
 - Identify a plan to address the non-crisis issues
- Based on Case Scenario B, invite a speaker from a local suicide prevention program to discuss responding to those impacted by suicide and how loved ones react to suicide. Discuss Mary's comments and possible responses. How might the children react? (CWCD 10)

Child Welfare Competency Eleven Knowledge of Social Work Values and Ethics

Case Scenario

- A. The children's counselor contacts the social worker to explain that Kate has disclosed sexual abuse by her mother. The social worker assigned to the case was appalled. He had put a great deal of effort into helping Mary and was shocked to hear this. He felt that Mary had deceived him and that she could never be a fit parent. Given what he had just learned, he believed that the best outcome would be termination of Mary's parental rights and that it would be helpful to the children if he remained on the case to prevent another disruption in their lives. He also recognized that his reaction was strong and might be unfair to Mary.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, review the NASW Code of Ethics and discuss the presented issues in relation to the Code of Ethics. Role play a meeting between the social worker and his supervisor to discuss his reaction to Kate's disclosure. (CWCD 11)

Child Welfare Competency Twelve Communication Skills

Case Scenario

- A. Kate, Denny, and Pam's record is selected for a record review by the social work supervisor. The supervisor notes that documentation on the worker's contacts with the children, parents, and foster parents are limited; usually consisting of a few sentences stating the contact was made. In weekly supervisory conferences, the worker is demonstrating meaningful productive dialogue with the family and children through her discussion of the case progress. When approached about the inconsistency between the documentation and verbal reports, the worker states, "I do not have time to write down all the stuff we talk about."
- B. Denny has been removed from the home and placed in a juvenile sex offender treatment program. The court order states that Mary see her son only at the residential facility and only with supervision. Denny may have contact with younger children only in the same way. Mary and Denny may have phone contact only with a residential counselor on the line. The social worker is meeting with Mary to discuss the visitation plan. The worker will also meet with Denny for the same purpose.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, discuss the importance of effective documentation in a record as a form of communication. What can result from poor documentation? Provide examples of high and low quality documentation. Brainstorm barriers to quality documentation and how to overcome barriers. Have each student write an example of documenting a monthly visit with Kate, Pam and their foster parent. (CWCD 12.4)
- Based on Case Scenario B, role play the meetings between the social worker and Mary to discuss the visitation plan. Role play the meeting between the social worker and Denny to discuss the visitation plan. Write up the visitation plan to ensure it is documented for the record. (CWCD 12)

Child Welfare Competency Thirteen Assessment Skills

Case Scenario

- A. Mary is reluctant to talk about her family of origin. When asked questions about them, she gives vague answers, changes the subject, or refuses to answer. The social worker is completing the comprehensive family assessment and must gather information on Mary's family.
- B. Kate is in individual therapy. Her therapist calls the social worker. The therapist informs the worker that Kate has been talking "a great deal" about a male teacher she has at school. The therapist states Kate talks about how nice the teacher is and states she wishes she lived with him. The therapist states, "I don't think there is anything to this but wanted you to know."

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, role play a discussion between Mary and the social worker explaining why it is important to have a quality Comprehensive Family Assessment. Discuss, as a group, ways to gather information from reluctant clients. (CWCD 13.2, 13.4)
- Based on Case Scenario B, outline the issues identified by the therapist. In small groups, determine if these issues should be addressed further. Make a written plan of action with rational. Discuss plans as a class (CWCD 13.2, 13.3, 13.4)

Child Welfare Competency Fourteen Organizational and Technology Skills

Case Scenario

- A. A new supervisor is assigned to your unit. He asks you to provide a brief written synopsis of each of your 18 cases in order to be aware of current and potential issues within the cases.

Teaching Tools

- Based on Case Scenario A, develop an outline to meet the supervisor's request. Determine the areas of information that will be most helpful to him as he learns about all of the cases in the unit. Complete a synopsis, using your outline, based on Kate, Denny, and Pam's case (original info). (CWCD 14.2)
- Based on Case Scenario A, discuss the opportunities and challenges of a new supervisor taking over an established work group. Role play a unit meeting with the new supervisor making the request in Scenario A. Consider how workers might react to this task (CWCD 14.1, 14.2)

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