

Case Vignettes:

Lucy is an 11-year-old White cisgender, girl who was removed from her biological mother's home for sexual abuse and neglect when she was six-years-old. Her father has never been present in her life. She was initially placed with her mother's cousin and lived there for a year, before her cousin became too ill to care for her. She was placed in a foster home, and her foster parents noted she was very affectionate and attached "really well" to them. When she was ten, Lucy began to wet the bed, and self-harm by scratching. When her foster parents found Lucia inappropriately touching their biological son, they disrupted placement. Due to this, she was placed in a group home for six months.

Lucy was finally placed with a foster family as a single child at age 11. At this time, Lucia's self-harm was increasing in intensity, she rarely spoke to her foster parents, and she was wetting the bed every night. She was also refusing to eat and lost 10 pounds over 2 months. Her foster parents caught her on the family computer sending inappropriate messages to strangers on the internet. Her caseworker brings her into your office, stating that the foster parents want to keep Lucy in their home, but don't know what to do to "make her open up."

- What pieces of information do you think are most important to address immediately?
- What more information would you want?
- Any initial (pre-treatment) action steps?
- From this limited information, what might you be thinking about as treatment targets?

Joshua is a 17-year-old Black, gay boy. He was removed immediately after birth after he tested positive for opioids and placed with his paternal grandparents. Reunification was attempted at age 3 for 2 years and age 10 for 1 year. During these times, he witnessed substance use and there was often not enough food or electricity. He has two younger half-siblings who ended up in foster care, due to his grandparents' inability to care for so many young children.

Joshua began drinking and smoking cannabis at age 11, now drinking nightly. He eloped from home several times, requiring police intervention, when his grandparents attempted to ground him. One morning after drinking with friends, he woke up covered in bruises and later found out he had gotten in a fight with another teenager who was pressing charges. He was placed on probation and his grandparents brought him to your office. He stated he will not talk with you and he doesn't "care if my grandparents give me up anyway," though they didn't mention this to you.

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Isabella is a 3.5-year-old Latina girl whose biological mother and father were 17-years-old when she was born. Isabella was placed into foster care (with her current foster mother, father, and older foster sister) when she was 18-months-old due to failure to thrive. Isabella's caseworker noted that Isabella's biological parents had difficulty providing food and formula as her mother was kicked out of her home when she turned 18 and was homeless for a period of time. Isabella's biological parents worked to earn their GEDs, engaged in therapy, and completed parenting classes. Isabella's biological parents missed visits at times early on, citing transportation issues. While they are no longer together, both are now doing well and the visitation schedule is unsupervised weekends. After visits, Isabella is reportedly more emotional, has "tantrums," has regressed in potty training, and her foster parents report she "looks so tired" and "only eats junk food."

Isabella's foster parents requested to begin parent-child interaction therapy, which was approved by their caseworker. Her foster parents do not want her biological parents involved, expressing to you that they are "upsetting Isabella" and worries that they are "trying to get custody back." They express that they view Isabella as their daughter and do not believe Isabella's biological parents to be fit parents.

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