

## Jeremy and Jana Scenario

Jeremy is a 12-year-old boy who has been in foster care for the past nine months. He was removed from his mother Jana when she was arrested in a drug bust. Jeremy was first placed with his paternal grandmother, Wilda. However, she was not able to manage his behaviors that included rages, cursing, punching walls and threatening to harm others. Wilda also cares for her disabled adult son. Jeremy also has a paternal aunt in the military, stationed overseas.

Jeremy's mother, Jana, is 26 years old. Jana had lost her own mother when she was 11. Her father had abandoned the family when she and her sister were very young. At first Jana and her sister were placed together with family. However, Jana began acting out and became assaultive and she was moved. From there her behaviors worsened and she was moved 10 times over the next 4 years before she just stopped coming 'home'. Jana lost contact with her sister and family members for many years. However, in a family search, DHS has found her sister Joyce living in Vancouver, Washington. Jana and Joyce have talked by phone. Jeremy has met Joyce and her husband.

When she was a teen, Jana was gang-involved. That is where she met Jeremy's father John. They had Jeremy when Jana was 16. John was African American and working to leave gang life and return to school. John was killed the year after Jeremy was born. After his death Jana began using heavily, had relationships with men who abused her and involved her in prostitution.

Jana was released 2 months ago after being in prison, is on parole, and is attending outpatient treatment, and has an NA sponsor she looks up to. She is working to start her life over. Jana's parole officer is very supportive.

Jana has begun visits with Jeremy. They had only seen each other a few times since his removal, but Jana wrote to Jeremy through his caseworker while incarcerated. Jana says that she loves Jeremy beyond words, and that she blames herself for Jeremy's problems. Jeremy had been very close to his mother despite serious neglect issues. However now during their visits, Jeremy becomes angry and disruptive. Jana has trouble managing his behavior and feels discouraged after the visits.

Jana has begun to work on her own trauma history in treatment. She has shared with her counselor that she doesn't know if she can handle Jeremy's behaviors and is worried. She thinks his behavior is due to all that he has gone through. She is willing to go to counseling with him. She wants him back with her but is afraid.

### Foster Placement

Jeremy is in his fourth placement with the Smiths, who are experienced foster parents. He does well with Daryl Smith. He likes to help Daryl work on his antique car. Daryl will 'need help with the care' when he sees Jeremy's behavior escalating and this often helps. There are 2 older

boys in the Smith's home who Jeremy likes to play video games with. This sometimes helps as well when he is upset. However, Jeremy's behaviors are beginning to escalate.

### Education

Jeremy is in a behavioral class, and his teacher Carla has known is fond of Jeremy despite his many outbursts and disruptive behaviors. Jeremy is very smart, especially in anything involving math or science. He loves to read anything with action and adventure. She notices that Jeremy feels badly when his behavior hurts others. Lately Carla has let Jeremy help other students with their math and he is remarkably patient with them.

### Child Welfare

Jeremy's child welfare caseworker, Dan, is not sure Jeremy should return to Jana. He has been in touch with Jana's sister Joyce and her husband Bob and is hoping they might step forward as permanent placement options if Jana does not succeed. The court has been lenient in extending timelines, as Jana has shown motivation and progress.

Dan is also pressing for residential placement for Jeremy. He is worried the Smiths will not be able to manage Jeremy's escalating behaviors, and that Jeremy will not be able to transition into a permanent home.

### Mental Health

Monica is Jeremy's mental health therapist. She thinks it is too soon for Jana to join in his therapy. Monica is working on building trust with Jeremy and she does not want that disrupted by his mother's involvement. Monica is in support of a residential treatment plan if Jeremy's behavior continues to escalate in his foster home. Jeremy has a diagnosis of oppositional defiant disorder with possible conduct disorder to be ruled out.

Jeremy and Jana are involved in several agencies including child welfare, special education, housing and mental health.

### Family Decision Team Members

- Jana, mother
- Jeremy 12-year-old youth
- Ms. Wilda, paternal grandmother
- Joyce and Bob, Jana's sister and her husband
- Joan, Jana's NA sponsor
- Dan, caseworker
- May & Daryl Smith, foster parents
- Carla, Jeremy's special Ed teacher
- Monica, Jeremy's mental health therapist

## Scenario Roles

Jana Jeremy's mother

- Jana does not trust the system and her own history confirms her mistrust. She knows that Dan does not like her. She is angry that although she is working hard at all that is asked, people don't believe she is going to make it. Sometimes her anger erupts during the meeting.
- Jana deeply loves her son and wants him to heal. She feels guilty for all that has happened to him because of her decisions in the past. She becomes triggered by Jeremy when he acts out.
- Jana is having difficulty with all of the requirements and adjustments of life outside of prison. She lacks confidence in her ability to get employment, housing and provide for Jeremy's needs.
- Jana is adamant that she does not want Jeremy 'institutionalized' in a treatment center. Jana her self when through placement in treatment settings and remembers them as traumatic experiences. She is afraid that Jeremy will be labeled and this will lead to worse outcomes for him, possibly start him on the road to incarceration.
- Jana is anxious about her sister. She is afraid of what her sister might think of her. Yet, she longs for the connection they once had.

Jeremy

- Jeremy is pretty shut down at the meeting. He has mixed feelings. He feels abandoned by his mother and is angry with her. He wants to live with her again, and yet is afraid. He and his mother were physically abused by some of Jana's boyfriends. They were sometimes homeless or living in drug houses, and Jeremy was often hungry. He has not shared these things with anyone.
- He becomes angry whenever residential treatment is brought up.

Ms. Wilda, paternal grandmother

- Ms. Wilda is worried about Jeremy. There were long periods when she had not contact with him due to his mother's lifestyle. She was not able to provide the support and stability he needed during that time. She was hopeful when Jeremy was placed with her that this would change. However, she was unable to handle his behaviors. She is angry with Jana and thinks Jeremy is better off not being with his mother.

Joyce, Jana's sister; Jeremy's aunt

- Joyce is anxious about the meeting. It was traumatic for her when she lost touch with her sister. She wants a relationship but is not sure what that can be now. Joyce was able to stay with family and learned to cope with all that had happened. She is stable and successful. She is married to Bob. They do not have children, and Joyce would like to have Jeremy if he cannot return to Jana. She wants him to have family.

Bob, Joyce's husband

- Bob is here for moral support to Joyce. He has not expressed this to Joyce, but he is unsure about bringing Jeremy and now Jana into their lives. He knows what the sisters went through when they were young and is sympathetic. However, Jana's history and Jeremy's behavior problems worry him. He wants to learn more about these things.

Joan Jana's NA sponsor

- Joan has been in recovery many years. She identifies with Jana, as Joan lost her children to adoption while she was in her addiction. She is able to help Jana during the meeting when Jana becomes angry or discouraged.

Dan Jeremy's DHS case worker

- Dan does not think Jana can handle Jeremy and meet his needs. His unexpressed hope is that the Jeremy will be adopted either by Jana's sister (if she was determined to be eligible) or a family like the Smiths who had experience working with kids you have Jeremy's behaviors.
- Dan grew up in an alcoholic home himself. He identifies with Jeremy, and thinks that it is likely that Jana will relapse and Jeremy will suffer more trauma if returned to her. Dan sees Jeremy's behavior as a result of the traumas he experienced with his mother. He believes that it is not productive for Jeremy to visit his mother, but cannot really express this directly due to DHS policies and return plan.
- Dan believes that Jeremy should be placed in a therapeutic treatment center so that his behaviors can be stabilized and he can be better able to transition to an adoptive placement if the return home plan fails.

May and Daryl Smith Foster parents

- The Smiths are experienced foster parents who are willing to work with Jeremy. However, they will not tolerate assaultive behavior that puts themselves or the other children in their home at risk.
- They are willing to work with Jana and share information and advice regarding Jeremy's behaviors. They do not have any strong opinions about whether Jeremy should reunite with Jana. However, they are concerned at how his behavior escalates after visits and think things might be moving too fast for Jeremy.
- They are not thinking of adopting Jeremy, but might consider long term placement.
- They are open to the idea of Jeremy going into residential treatment and being a resource for him when discharged.
- During the meeting, Daryl tries to help Jeremy talk and calm him when he gets upset.

Carla Jeremy's special Ed teacher

- Carla is very fond of Jeremy. She has seen him make progress, especially after being placed with the Smiths. She realizes that Jeremy is very smart and needs to be challenged in school. It is hard to provide this in the behavioral class setting, but Jeremy is not ready to be mainstreamed. He has come very close to being moved into a more

restrictive setting. She thinks Jeremy needs opportunities to feel capable and valued by adults and peers. She disagrees with the idea of a more restrictive setting as his intellectual and socialization needs may not get met.

Monica Jeremy's mental health therapist

- Monica is Jeremy's third therapist. She sees therapy as the place children heal from the problems their families have caused. Parents are included more as a way to instruct them about the child's needs. Jeremy is happy to play games, but does not want to open up.
- Monica does not want Jana involved in Jeremy's treatment as this might disrupt her ability to build a therapeutic relationship with him. She also does not think it wise for Jeremy to build expectations about his mother as parents often relapse. She thinks visits are disrupting Jeremy's progress with the Smiths and setting Jeremy up for another failed placement.
- Monica is in support of a residential treatment plan if Jeremy's behavior continues to escalate in his foster home.