

CASA Educational Advocacy Initiative Training
CASE STUDY

Re: Antoine

Age: 30 months

Re: Brianna

Age: 11 years

Re: Carlos

Age: 16 years

Antoine, Brianna, and Carlos were taken into temporary legal and physical custody by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P [formerly known as DYFS]) due to substantiated domestic violence and physical abuse perpetrated by the biological father of Antoine, who lived with the children and their mother. All of the children, and their mother, were taken to the hospital following the latest incident of family violence which led to removal. Antoine suffered severe brain trauma (diagnosis of Traumatic Brain Injury). Carlos suffered bruising around his face and lacerations around his right ear after receiving several blows while trying to help his mother and Antoine escape the violence. Brianna was not involved directly in the incident and suffered no physical symptoms. The children's birth mother tested positive for controlled and dangerous substances and admitted to a heroin addiction, which may or may not have existed while she was pregnant with Antoine.

All three children have different fathers. Antoine's birth father left the country shortly after the allegations of domestic violence and physical abuse were made. His whereabouts are unknown and neither DYFS/DCP&P nor the family can locate him. Brianna's father is incarcerated, and Carlos' is deceased. The children were placed with a resource family with the case goal being reunification upon their mother's successful completion of DCP&P set tasks (therapy, drug treatment and parenting classes).

Brianna's paternal grandmother and Carlos' paternal aunt were recently approved as caregivers and the children will be moved to their homes. Carlos' aunt lives only two towns away from his current placement and current school (and only a 25 minute drive even in the worst of traffic). Brianna's grandmother lives three counties away from her current placement and current school. It will take more than an hour to drive each way, even if there is no traffic.

Antoine: Antoine is 30 months old. His birth was unremarkable, but when he was approximately 20 months old, he suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury as a result of his father's acts of physical abuse (described briefly above). He was hospitalized and treated, but it does not appear that there was any referral for Early Intervention Services at the time.

Brianna: Brianna is 11 years old, is in the 5th grade, and is set to move up to the middle school in September. She has a severe case of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder – she cannot sit still for long periods of time, has trouble paying attention, and seems to never listen in class. She has also had to be disciplined numerous times for disrupting classmates while they are trying to work, being disorderly in the cafeteria, and acting out on the playground during recess. Brianna has been suspended from school for a total of 8 school days so far this school year. Brianna states that she “hates school” and that she does not have any friends there. Her resource parents have told you that it is a battle to get her to school each morning and that she has very few friends there and seems isolated and depressed. Brianna’s teachers report that she has difficulty getting along with her peers and is not engaged in any school-related activities or clubs. Brianna’s current teacher told you that she spoke to supervisory personnel about Brianna’s behavior, but there is no record indicating what, if anything, occurred as a result of that communication. Brianna had an Intervention and Referral Services Plan a couple of years back, but there is nothing in her more recent educational records about Intervention and Referral Services. She is not classified and is not in a Special Education program; she does not currently have a 504 Plan, and it is unclear from her records whether there was ever any evaluation to determine eligibility for accommodations under Section 504.

Carlos: Carlos is 16 years old and is a Junior in High School. Carlos is extremely happy in his current school and has many friends. He is active on the track team, where he is considered to be very talented. He loves his team and hopes to get a college scholarship based on his athletic skills. Carlos is also active in the school’s Key Club, which does community service projects, and is earning community service credits for college. Since the age of 10, Carlos has been classified with a Specific Learning Disability because of his severe Dyslexia. His records include an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) dated two years ago, which entitles him to Special Education and Related Services for the Specific Learning Disability of Dyslexia. The IEP indicates that his Special Education placement is in a “General Education classroom with Supplementary Aids and Services” but the only supplementary aid or service he is receiving is extra testing time and additional time to complete reading and writing assignments. A review of Carlos’ school records indicates that he is reading at a 7th grade level. Additionally, two of his teachers and his track coach noted that Carlos started exhibiting hearing issues and other attention-related problems about 10 months ago (around the time of the incident leading to placement). There is no record of any change in his IEP since that time. Given what Carlos and others have told you about his athletics and how he is regarded at school, it would be surprising if the school was not amenable to addressing any issues that might arise for him.