

HONORING, UNITING, AND CELEBRATING FAMILIES

SEVEN SIBLINGS REMAIN CONNECTED AS THEIR PARENTS GET LIVES BACK ON TRACK

A Social Worker's Story

As a Casey Family Programs social worker, I received a referral for a sibling group of seven in Los Angeles County in December 2012. The children were removed from their parents, primarily due to drug dealing out of their home. There were other safety issues, including the father's methamphetamine use and the eldest child suffering a diabetic coma because his type 1 diabetes was not monitored properly.



The seven children were separated and placed in temporary foster homes until county workers could arrange for relatives to take them in. The three younger kids were placed with their paternal uncle and his family, while the four older kids were placed with their maternal great aunt and her family. They were all scared and anxious about what would happen next. When we tried to engage the parents in services, they declined, which made it difficult to know how to best support them. We held a series of meetings to talk about next steps with the family and county worker.

This family had a difficult time in 2013. The parents were in denial over their addictions and did not complete rehabilitation programs. The children struggled to adjust to living with their new caregivers, and the two eldest boys struggled with low school performance and behavioral issues. Two of the children moved to a nonrelative foster home. By the summer of 2013, the parents had divorced and were living separate lives while maintaining sporadic contact with the kids. After the mother's second arrest in December 2013, she was ordered by the court to complete a 6-month inpatient drug treatment program. At the same time, the father decided to enroll in a 6-month outpatient program.

This was a real turning point for the parents. Once they got serious about treating their addictions and leaving the drug culture, their lives slowly got back on track. Both parents completed their programs in the summer of 2014, and both were able to find temporary housing while attending outpatient support groups to maintain their sobriety. The parents revised their priorities and committed themselves to being more available to their children. Visits became more regular, and the mother became more involved in helping her two eldest sons at home

and in school. By early 2015, both parents were working full-time and searching for permanent housing. The father regained custody of the three youngest children in February, while the mother regained custody of the eldest child in April. Casey Family Programs supported the families by continuing to monitor for safety, providing emotional support to everyone involved, linking the family to community resources, and providing job assistance.

The father and his three sons continue to do well, and the father shares custody of the boys with their mother. In October 2015, the remaining three older children were reunified with the mother, and it is expected that the county will terminate its jurisdiction this year. It's been a long, challenging road, but the family's commitment and the right supports brought them together again.

Learn more about the foster care services provided by Casey Family Programs at <http://www.casey.org/>, the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building communities of hope for children and families across America.



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