

Maria

Maria is a 16-month-old girl who attends the Happy Elephant Child Care Center. She is new (she began two weeks ago) to the class of 12 toddlers who range in age from 12 to 24 months. Maria has been biting and hitting the other children in the classroom and none of the efforts to stop her biting have been effective. In the morning Maria runs ahead of her foster mother and quickly grabs toys away from other children. She seems unaware that another child is playing with the toy. If the other child tugs back on the toy that Maria has grabbed, she will bite the child's arm or hit the child on the head and shoulders. She has also bitten a caregiver when the caregiver attempted to intervene. This pattern of behavior may take place several times a day. Both the biting and hitting are done with intensity and have left bruises and marks on other children and staff. The caregivers in the classroom report that they have never had a child who bites as frequently as Maria. When she is unsuccessful in getting the object that interests her, she collapses on the floor and screams for up to 30 minutes at a time. During her tantrums she is inconsolable. She is difficult to hold and she will not allow herself to be cuddled. Eventually she calms down and is able to be distracted or engaged with an activity or toy. The staff at Happy Elephant have told Ms. Carter, Maria's foster mother, that one of the other parents has threatened to withdraw her child if the staff cannot stop Maria from biting. The staff is very concerned about their ability to help Maria.

Information Gathered from Discussion with the Family

Ms. Carter has been Maria's foster mother for 3 weeks. Ms. Carter is actually a cousin of Maria's mother. She and 3 other family members have agreed to take Maria and her 7 siblings who were removed from the home of their mother by Children's Protective Services because the mother failed to sever her ties to a boyfriend who is known to traffic in heroin. Maria's mother was investigated by Children's Protective Services regarding concerns about her neglect of her 8 minor children. The condition of the home, the presence of the boyfriend, the impending birth of another child, and her failure to attend parenting education classes resulted in the removal of the 8 children.

Ms. Carter works during the day. She is the single mother of five children of her own. She agreed to take Maria because the family did not want to see the children go into homes with strangers. Ms. Carter reports that her children are all in school now and she has never had a child that bit others. She is very worried that she will lose this child care placement for Maria. It is convenient and she is able to bring Maria by bus and drop her off on her way to her job in an office a few blocks away from the center.

During the intake interview Ms. Carter is concerned because Maria has used little or no language to date. Her primary communications seem to be grunts, inconsistent babble or screaming and frequent collapses to the floor if her wishes are thwarted. Ms. Carter notices that Maria watches her when she talks but does not try even simple words herself even when she is prompted. Ms. Carter reports that she had talked with the pediatrician about Maria's lack of language in either her native language or English, but the pediatrician suggested that they give Maria at least 6 months to adjust to her new environment before "they put her through an assessment."

Ms. Carter reports that Maria has had little contact with her siblings since she was placed with her. She has seen her mother once in the three weeks since she was removed. Her elderly grandmother has come by to visit but she does not seem to be able to contribute to Maria's care and she does not have her own car so she has to be driven over by another daughter. This family is not sure what will happen to all of the children if their mother does not get them back. Ms. Carter doesn't know how long she will provide care for Maria. She is hoping her cousin will follow through on the plan worked out with CPS so that she will get her children back. Ms. Carter reports that Maria has few toys at the house but that she does like her blanket and a soft baby doll. Ms. Carter has been leaving both at home during the day. Ms. Carter reports that Maria has not been biting in her home and she doesn't believe she was biting in her previous day care.

Ms. Carter's home is busy and Maria has a crib in a room with two older children. Ms. Carter has been letting her stay up until the other children go to bed and then she puts Maria to sleep in the living room on the couch, because she will not fall asleep in her crib. Maria is expected to feed herself in her high chair. She eats slowly with her fingers and still uses a bottle before she goes to sleep.

Date of Observation 5/17/07 Day _____ Time 7:30

Child's Initials MS

Child's Name Maria Child's DOB 1/4/2006 Age 16 months

Observer's Name Tina Observer's Role Center Director

Location of Observation classroom

Adult or other children in the observation by order of appearance (note initials):

1 Sam (child) 2 Donna (child) 3 Andrea (teacher)

What do you see?

Maria walks into class room ahead of her foster Mo, Mrs. Carter.

Maria is smiling and seems happy to be in the room.

She runs over to Sam and looks at what is on the table.

She runs over to housekeeping. She goes over to Donna who has a baby doll she is trying to wrap in a blanket.

Maria takes the blanket from Donna and runs away.

Donna screams and Andrea comes over

Andrea explains to both children that the toys are to share and says to Maria that she hopes she is sorry.

Andrea asks Maria if she has had her diaper changed and then she takes her to the diaper table to change her.

Andrea talks to another child about getting breakfast ready.

She finishes changing Maria's diaper and asks Sam if he is ready to have his changed.

She tells Maria to go to the table for breakfast.

Infant-Toddler Observation Documentation

Date of Observation 5/10/07 Day Thurs Time 4:30

Child's Initials MS

Child's Name Maria Child's DOB 1/4/06 Age 16 mon

Observer's Name Abby Observer's Role teacher

Location of Observation classroom

Adult or other children in the observation by order of appearance (note initials):

1 YM 2 LT 3 RJ adult 4 _____

What do you see?

RJ approaches Maria as she is waking up from nap on cot.

Maria is crying

RJ asks Maria why she is crying

RJ takes Maria to changing table to change her.

She needs to completely undress her. Meanwhile LT wakes up crying.

RJ puts Maria down on the floor and tells her to go get a book

RJ goes to LT

Maria lies on the floor and starts crying and then escalates to tantrum

RJ lets her lie on the floor and tells her she had her turn to sleep

She tells Maria she needs to take care of LT

Maria kicks the cot YM is lying on until she wakes

She winds down

She pulls YM's blanket off his cot and when he reaches for it she bites his arm. RJ picks up YM and tells Maria she cannot bite.