

CASA Report to the Court

In the matter of: Heather M. DOB: dd-mm-yyy Case No. J-xxxxx

Guardian Ad Litem: XXXX

CASA: Pat X.

Date CASA assigned to case: mm-dd-yyyy

Court Date: January dd, yyyy

Type of Hearing: Permanency Plan Ratification

Persons Interviewed

Heather

Mr. and Mrs. Foster

Kelly M.

Mary R.

Ms. Amanda

Melissa M.

James X.

Relation to Child(ren)

Child

Foster Parents

Maternal Step-grandmother

Maternal Step-Aunt

XX Daycare Instructor

Mother

Father

Background Information

The above-named child was taken into emergency DCS custody October 3, 2007, due to allegations of sexual abuse and neglect against the mother, Melissa M. These allegations came after DCS workers went to Melissa M's for a scheduled meeting regarding a DCS case opened 8/30/07. Upon arrival at the mother's home, the DCS worker found the child unkempt and without supervision, as both Melissa and her guest were asleep. Melissa tested positive for cocaine and marijuana. Melissa M is the mother; James X is the father of the child. The child currently resides in a DCS foster home in Blount County, where she has been placed since 10/3/07.

Persons Interviewed

Heather (child):

CASA met with Heather on November 13 and 21, 2007 at XX Daycare and on November 12, 2007 and January 12, 2008 at the home of the foster parents. Heather is a 3-year-old child who, when CASA first met her, appeared enthusiastic, loving, yet quiet. At XX Daycare, CASA observed and played with Heather and her classmates and observed her ability to share. During the visit at the foster parents' home, CASA observed Heather happily interact with her foster family ("Mommy and Daddy"). CASA notes that Heather's verbal skills have greatly improved from November 2007 to January 2008.

On 10/24/07 Heather had a forensic/full pelvic exam at New Hope Child Advocacy Center. The initial exam showed possible genital warts. However, in a visit on date to XX, dermatologist,

Heather was diagnosed with xxxx, a contagious condition believed to be the source of the warts. On 1/10/08 chemical treatment was begun on affected areas.

Heather had a psychosexual evaluation on 10/13/07. The report states that she did not give any specific evidence of being sexually abused, but the case is classified as “unable to complete” due to age and lack of verbal communication. There are reports of her committing sexual boundary violations when she first came into state custody.

Mr. and Mrs. Foster (Foster Parents)

CASA met with the foster family at their home in Blount County on November 12, 2007 and January 12, 2008. The foster mother described the day when Heather arrived at the foster home, stating that, “She was dirty and smelled of urine and had red, swollen bumps on her face a genital area.” Mrs. X stated Heather still cries and screams “hurt, hurt, hurt” when being bathed. Mrs. Foster stated that “Heather has adapted quickly to the new home, despite displays of inappropriate sexual behavior and phobia of being touched in the genital region, specifically at bath time.”

The foster parents have custody of Mr. Foster’s x-year-old daughter Kerry. CASA observed Kerry nurturing Heather and helping her with arts and crafts. CASA observed that Heather’s behavior, speech, and emotional, nutritional and general well-being all appear to have improved markedly since November 2007 in the care of the foster family. CASA has observed the foster home, a two-bedroom apartment, to be clean, safe, and welcoming. Heather shares a room with Kerry. The family is very interested in adopting Heather. This couple is in their mid-thirties and are both employed.

Mrs. Foster stated that she has maintained a log of every attempted and achieved phone call with Melissa M. (the mother). Mrs. Foster states that every call is very brief, despite her efforts to get Heather to talk and Mrs. Foster feels she is not truly aware who they are speaking with.

Jim and Kelly M. (Maternal grandfather and step-grandmother):

CASA spoke to Kelly M. on November 20, 2007 by phone. The M’s currently reside in XXX, MI. Kelly stated Melissa M. (mother) has had two children before Heather. Kelly stated that Melissa’s son, Nicholas X, age 5, is in the custody of John X, his birth father. Kelly stated that John was granted full custody of Nicholas after Melissa left them in XX, MI

Melissa’s son, Dustin, was born on mm/dd/yy. Kelly stated that DHS in XX County was involved with Melissa and Dustin from the time he was approximately three months old because of allegations of neglect and failure to thrive. Dustin was born with a “chronic severe kidney condition and fetal alcohol syndrome”. Kelly stated that Dustin “did not receive appropriate care or nutrition while under Melissa’s care”. Kelly provided CASA a copy of documentation showing that Melissa M’s Parental Rights to Dustin were terminated on mm/dd/yy in XXX County District Court. Dustin has been legally adopted by Jim and Kelly M.

Mary R. (Step-aunt to Heather and Sally M.)

CASA spoke to Mary R. on 11/24/07. Mary is the step-aunt of Heather and the niece of Kelly M. Mary stated to CASA that she would very much like to adopt Heather. Mary lives in XX, MI and is 39 years old, single, home owner, elementary school teacher.

Ms. Amanda (XX Daycare)

Ms. Amanda at XX Daycare has provided daycare services for Heather while in the care of Melissa M. (Mother) and the foster family. CASA interviewed Ms. Amanda on dd/mm/yy. Ms. Amanda stated that Heather is “much better off, happier, cleaner, and more relaxed” since being in the care of the foster family. Ms. Amanda stated that Heather was “extremely sensitive to being changed,” “was usually dirty,” and “always smelled bad” while in the care of Melissa.

Melissa M. (mother):

CASA met with Melissa on 12/1/07 at a Burger King in X City. Melissa stated, “I bonded very well with my child.” Melissa stated she “never did do anything to hurt (her) daughter.” Melissa stated that in Feb 2006, James (father) “was keeping Heather” and when she got Heather back the child told her she was “hurtin down there.” Melissa stated that in March 2006 she took Heather to see Dr. R. at XX Family Physicians who told her it was “normal” and a “phase” but never checked the genitals. Melissa stated she thinks “Heather has ADD” and “something’s wrong upstairs”, she “can’t express herself and has tantrums.”

Melissa stated she had a son Dustin and is “Letting my parents raise him. They’re good people.” Melissa stated she “couldn’t afford him” as he had health problems. Melissa stated there were no court actions.

Melissa stated she has another son, Nicholas who lives with his father, XX, in X City, State. Melissa stated she’s “never signed anything” and states she’s still “got custody...if not...her parents would’ve told her.” Melissa states that she has had not contact with Nicholas in 4 years.

James X. (father):

CASA met with James along with the DCS case manager, XX, on 1/6/08 in the downtown Knoxville efficiency apartment he shares with his fiancé, her minor child and her sister. James’ paternity of Heather was established by Order of Paternity on April 4, 2007.

James stated that he loves his daughter and has not seen Heather since December 2006. As of 1/6/07 he had not submitted to an A&D assessment, but stated that he is “drug free.” He was advised of the Perm Plan on 1/6/07 and agreed to all DCS requirements for him.

James stated that he is separated from his wife XX to whom he was married 2/07. He currently resides with XX who stated she believes she is currently two months pregnant. James stated that he would seek to complete the A&D assessment, parenting class, and psychological examination. However, James told CASA and the DCS case manager that he has two legal matters:

1. Warrant for Violation of Probation in X County, TN for “driving on a suspended licenses due to a speeding violation.”

2. "Simple possession in X County, NC" shortly after his marriage 2/5/07. He believes there is a warrant out for him there.

James stated that he has no intention of returning to either area and therefore sees no need to remedy these legal matters.

Summary and Recommendations

Heather has been in DCS custody since October 2007, and is doing very well in the foster placement. She now has consistency, stability, and access to health care, and is attending daycare. However, foster care is a temporary solution for this child, who needs permanency in her life. The current placement should be considered as a viable permanent placement should no appropriate family placement be found. There appears to be a viable family placement with family members of the mother. Step-aunt, Mary R, has expressed a desire to adopt Heather and keep her near Melissa's family in X City, State. There is an extensive support system in (city), including Heather's grandfather and step-grandmother, James & Kelly M., who are also the adoptive parents of Melissa's birth son, Dustin.

Based on the information gathered to date, CASA has serious concerns as to Melissa's ability to ever be an appropriate mother for Heather. If DCS works with Melissa to regain custody of her child, Melissa will require extensive services to ensure that she is a safe placement. James X has expressed interest in staying involved with Heather. However, CASA is concerned that Mr. X's outstanding legal issues will create a long delay in his ability to regain custody of Heather.

CASA makes the following recommendations based on the information acquired to date:

1. Heather should remain in her current foster placement until permanency is decided.
2. DCS should ensure that medical records for Heather from Dr. R., the New Hope Child Advocacy Center, and the Health Department be sent to their primary care physician, Dr. S., in Blount County.
3. DCS should ensure that Heather continue therapy sessions at New Hope. DCS should obtain periodic status reports from the therapist and provide those to the GAL and CASA.
4. Melissa M. should follow all requirements set out by DCS in the permanency plan dated mm/dd/yy with expected achievement date of mm/dd/yy.
5. James X. should follow all requirements in the permanency plan dated mm/dd/yy (to include resolving his legal issues) with expected achievement date of mm/dd/yy.
6. DCS and GAL should ensure ICPC is initiated, expedited, and followed up on behalf of Mary R. in X City, MI as a possible permanent placement for Heather.

Respectfully Submitted:

Reviewed By:

CASA Volunteer

CASA Staff