

Case Study: The Carr Case

Adults

Mrs. Thelma Carr, mother (32 years old)

Mr. Henry Carr, father (34 years old)

Children

Dolores Carr (7 years old)

Laura Carr (4 years old)

Mindy Carr (2 years old)

The Presenting Problem

Last Saturday night, at 11 p.m., Mrs. Thelma Carr brought her three daughters (Dolores, seven; Laura, four; and Mindy, two) to the police station. She did not wait to speak with an officer, but the children told the officer on duty that their mother could not take care of them right now and that she would be back for them. When parents and extended family could not be located, all three children were placed in the same emergency foster home. Monday morning, the agency received an ex parte order from juvenile court for custody. Tuesday, at 2:30 p.m., Mrs. Carr appeared at the agency with a babysitter she had just hired and asked to take the children home.

Family History

The Carr's have a history of separations, unemployment and financial difficulties. They separated the first time before their youngest child was born. That separation lasted three months. During one of their separations, Mr. Carr appeared at the babysitter's home and took away one of the daughters, Laura, without his wife's knowledge. The uproar that ensued resulted in the children being placed temporarily in foster care for the first time.

The family's second involvement with DCF resulted from a report from a neighbor. The neighbor reported that the Carr's did not make adequate provision for the children, the children were poorly fed and supervised and were sometimes seen outside late at night. The children were also seen at least once per week outside without proper clothing for inclement weather (shorts and T-shirts during snowy conditions). Several neighbors were convinced that the children were not developing normally, especially Laura and Mindy, the youngest two. The girls were examined at Lassen Hospital where the attending pediatrician noted that all three children were filthy. He also diagnosed Mindy, the two-year-old, as "failure to thrive" because she had poor

nutritional and hygienic care. The girls were placed in foster care for six months. In care, Mindy gained weight and improved.

About a year ago, when Mr. Carr lost his job as a taxi driver, the family applied for public assistance, but Mr. Carr found work and public assistance was terminated three months later. A few months later, Thelma and Henry separated, and she and the children stayed with her parents for two months.