

Case Scenario: Nicole Adams

Family History: Nicole Adams (7) is the third of four children (Amanda - 12, Craig - 9, and Lauren - 6). The Adams family has been known to the local Children and Youth (C&Y) agency for several years due to issues of intimate partner violence and abuse/neglect of the children. Mrs. Adams has a history of mental illness, including multiple psychiatric inpatient hospitalizations. Mrs. Adams' frequent hospitalizations led to the agency's most recent involvement.

During the intake phase, Amanda, the eldest child, reported that she was sexually abused by her stepfather, Mr. Adams (who is the father of the three youngest children). Since the investigation, Mr. Adams has been convicted and he is currently incarcerated for sexually abusing Amanda. None of the other children have made allegations of sexual abuse. Further assessment revealed that the children were seriously neglected due to lack of appropriate supervision and environmental concerns as well as a lack of food in the home. Nicole's brother, Craig, has also received previous injuries as a result of being hit by his father during attempts to intervene in the physical altercations between his parents. Nicole and her siblings were placed in the care and custody of the agency following Nicole's accidental ingestion and overdose of her mother's prescription medication.

Nicole: Nicole was enrolled in Head Start when she was younger, but her attendance was sporadic. Nicole is now in First Grade at school, and she appears to have learning delays that put her behind the majority of her classmates. Nicole doesn't listen to the teacher in class, and she exhibits stubbornness and defiance. Nicole has also been disruptive in class and can be volatile at times. Nicole reports misplacing her homework assignments and her desk is very messy. Nicole can be hostile and threatening toward other students and she often starts fights. When confronted about misbehavior, Nicole often withdraws emotionally and she "shuts down." Nicole often prefers to play by herself, and her play usually centers on a fantasy world. Nicole has struggled with bedwetting at night, and she has also had accidents at school. Nicole has a poor self-image and has made several statements that she is "ugly" and that nobody likes her. Nicole is not close with any of her siblings even though they all remain in the same foster home.

Directions: Respond to the following questions based on the information provided in the case scenario about Nicole Adams and her family.

1. What behavioral concerns do you have about Nicole Adams?

2. What social-emotional concerns do you have about Nicole Adams?

3. What cognitive concerns do you have about Nicole Adams?

4. Is it possible that these concerns could lead to possible mental health issues for Nicole? Explain why or why not.

5. How might these concerns impact the overall functioning of Nicole and her family?

Rycus, J., Hughes, R. (1998). *Field guide to child welfare: Child development and child welfare, Volume III*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.