

# HANDOUT #2: CASE STUDY FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Lorena grew up in a family with severe violence. Her father was addicted to alcohol. Her mother attempted to protect her children from his outbursts but was often not able to. Lorena watched her father physically and emotionally abuse her mother regularly. Lorena would run to her room and lock the door to get away from it. Lorena left home at age 14 and lived on the street with other teens, moving from place to place. She began using drugs and eventually did sex work to support her addiction. After giving birth to Darius, she had no place to go from the hospital. Social Services got involved and Lorena and Darius were placed in foster care together. Lorena remained in the home for 2 years, however she often broke the rules, left Darius at night to go out, ditched school, and eventually began using drugs and doing sex work again. When she left for the last time at age 17, she asked her foster mother to take good care of Darius, and she has not been heard from since. Social Services has tried to find her, without success.

***If you are the parent who fosters or adopts Darius, what might you tell him around age 5 if he asks about his mother, Lorena?***

## **Options to consider:**

- a) Your mother, Lorena, couldn't take care of you, and she asked me to be sure you are safe.
- b) Your mother, Lorena, had a hard time taking care of herself so she couldn't take care of children and she asked me to take care of you.
- c) Your mother, Lorena, made bad choices and messed up her life, and she couldn't take care of you. She knew I would take good care of you, so she left you here with me.
- d) Lorena had grown up problems that made it hard for her to take care of kids. She wanted you to be in a safe home with people who could love you and take care of you so that's why you live with us. Now, you're safe in our family and we love you very much. Whenever you want, just ask me if you have more questions.



***If you are the parent who fosters or adopts Darius, what might you tell him around age 10 if he asks about his mother, Lorena?***

**Options to consider:**

- a) Your mother, Lorena, made some poor choices and was taking medicine that she should not have been taking. The medicine made her sick, and she could not take care of you or any child. She left you with us to be sure you were loved and safe.
- b) Your mother, Lorena, had a bad childhood and did not know how to be a good parent. She made some poor choices and got in trouble and could not keep you.
- c) Your mother, Lorena, had adult problems that made it hard for her to take care of herself or a child. She lived here with us all for a while after you were born, but her problems kept getting bigger, so she decided she needed to leave. She asked us to take good care of you and knew that you'd be loved and safe with us. I wish I knew more to tell you, but I don't know where she is right now. I hope someday she will let us know how she is doing. Do you have any questions?
- d) Your mother, Lorena, had a terrible childhood with a lot of violence between her parents. She never learned how to be a good parent, and she did not take good care of herself. When she lived here with you, she kept breaking the rules, so she had to leave. She knew you would be safe here after she left. Do you have more questions?

***If you are the parent who fosters or adopts Darius, what might you tell him around age 15 if he asks about his mother, Lorena?***

**Options to consider:**

- a) Your mother, Lorena, had a difficult childhood because her parents fought all of the time and her father had a problem with alcohol. She left home when she was 14 and experienced homelessness for a couple of years, until you were born, when you and she came to live with us. We knew that she had used drugs when she was living on the streets and hoped that she could stay clean and take care of you. We helped her in every way we could think of, and we really cared about her. She was able to live here for two years, but sadly, she continued to use drugs and behave in a way that was not healthy for her or for you. She asked us to take care of you and left when you were 2 years old, knowing that you were loved and that you would be safe here. We don't know where she is now, but we hope she has gotten the help she needed. Just like her father, Lorena struggled with addiction. Addiction can run in families, and she used drugs during her pregnancy with you, so it's important for you to know that you're at greater risk of getting addicted, even if you just experiment with drugs or alcohol. How are you feeling about what I just told you? What other questions do you have?



- b) Your mother, Lorena, left home when she was 14 and lived on the street. She used drugs and was a prostitute to pay for her drugs. It was a hard life. After you were born, you and she were placed in foster care with us, and we tried to help her get her life together, but she wouldn't stop using drugs. She kept leaving to see her friends, and we finally decided that she had to leave. She wanted you to be safe and she knew that we would love you and take care of you. We do not know where she is and whether she got help. I hope she did.
- c) Your mother, Lorena, brought you to live with us when you were a baby. She had a hard time in her family, and it didn't get easier for her when she was a teenager. She tried to take care of you, but she fell back into old habits, and she could not stay here. She knew you would be taken care of and loved, and she told me she wanted that for you. I do not know where she is or if she ever got help. I'm sorry we don't have more information for you.

