

Katie Parker: age 5 Update

5 month Update

For the first month Jennifer complied with all aspects of the plan, coming to all eight scheduled visits nearly on time. In the second week, she found a job working overnight at a 24-hour gas station/convenience store, ½ mile from her new apartment, which her AA sponsor helped her get. She said the visitation schedule continued to work for her although her life was hectic—sleeping from 7 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., working five nights a week from midnight to 8 a.m., and taking a morning nap. She attended AA several nights a week at 5 p.m. whenever she could catch a ride both ways. She said she was saving money for a car to cut down on how hectic her life was. She said she owed a dealer \$300 from when she was using drugs, and he kept bugging her, so she would have to pay him off before any car. She agreed to go to the parenting classes that Vernon had discussed with her, but hadn't yet worked out a schedule and therefore never signed up. She met weekly with her AA sponsor, who took her out to a breakfast diner for their talks.

During the fifth week of the visitation plan, Jennifer left a message for Vernon saying she hadn't paid her cell phone bill and now she had no phone to call Katie. She had decided to make a payment to her dealer instead because he was threatening her. Vernon developed a plan with Jennifer in which she would walk to the convenience store near to her home for the 6:50 p.m. call to Katie. Jennifer said that she would try, but she was not successful to date.

Jennifer missed her first visit with Katie in the sixth week of her visitation plan. Vernon called the gas station, and Jennifer had missed work without warning. Vernon stopped by her apartment and she was not there. However, after the missed visit, the AA sponsor and Jennifer together called Vernon. Jennifer explained that she had been roughed up by her dealer and didn't want Katie to see her black eye. She then called Katie that night and spoke with her, explaining that she was sick and couldn't visit for awhile. With the sponsor's help, Jennifer reported the assault to the police and returned home and to her job.

In the seventh week of the visitation plan, Jennifer resumed visitation as scheduled. She still had not found a way to call Katie at night. The case aide reported to you that Jennifer was exhausted and distracted at both visits that week, and that she kept saying to her hyper-vigilant daughter, "It's okay, mommy's just tired, but I am fine." Jennifer was attentive to Katie some of the time and preoccupied at others. The Fitzgerald's reported that Katie seems more anxious than usual.

Jennifer reported to Vernon that she was too frazzled to go to the parenting class—she was again working at the gas station and had just found out that her rent was going up next month. She also told him that her life felt like it was on the verge of unraveling, and that she was thinking maybe she should go to Atlantic City for just a few months to make some real money working as a card dealer. She said she had connections there. She believed that if she could get ahead financially, she could live a more regular life. Jennifer said the reason that she hadn't done anything yet was because she knew that losing connection to Katie would be really bad for her daughter, and maybe the judge and you would think she couldn't be a good parent.

Katie Parker: Update (continued)

1 week later Vernon received a phone call from the county jail notifying him that Jennifer has been arrested and incarcerated for prostitution. This is her third offense and a violation of her parole. She was also in possession of marijuana and crack, and was intoxicated when picked up. When the caseworker visited Jennifer in prison, she begged him not to take Katie away from her. Sobbing, she told him that Katie was all she had to live for and that if he took her little girl, she would have nobody. She told him that the drugs belonged to a friend and that the prostitution was just a one-time thing, so that she could earn some extra money to pay her bills this month.

By the end of the school year, Katie's teacher reports that she is less shy and starting to play with a couple of the other children. She is also doing better at regulating her emotions in the classroom, and coping better with stimuli and frustration.

Visits with Mr. Johnson went okay for the first three weeks. One week, however, when Mr. Fitzgerald and Katie arrived at the office for the visit, Mr. Johnson was not there. They had waited in the car for 30 minutes when Mr. Fitzgerald and the worker decided to cancel the visit. Katie, in tears, begged Mr. Fitzgerald to wait a few more minutes. Just then, Mr. Johnson arrived disheveled and agitated. He said there was a traffic jam and his bus was delayed. Two weeks later, Mr. Johnson reported that he realized he would not be able to maintain a visitation schedule with Katie and it was in her best interest if he was not involved in her life since he could not be consistent. He expressed a desire to voluntarily relinquish his parental rights.

Katie continued to see her grandmother once every two weeks. The Fitzgerald's have been extremely helpful and bring Katie to her grandmother's house for the visits. They report that Katie loves to do puzzles with her grandmother and they enjoy each other's company. "Grandmom" Parker continues to maintain that she wants a relationship with Katie, but due to her physical disabilities, knows she can not provide full-time care for her.

The Fitzgerald's continue to state that they can be a permanent resource for Katie.

Outcome of First Review Hearing

The caseworker requested a goal change to adoption for Katie. Her recommendation was based on the continued risk to Katie and lack of progress towards achieving the goals on the FSP by both Ms. Parker and Mr. Johnson.

At the court hearing Mr. Johnson was clear that he or his family could not be a resource for Katie.

Ms. Parker begged the judge/master to give her a second chance stating that she re-entered D/A treatment and would immediately sign up for parenting classes. Her treatment program said they would help her maintain her housing.

Katie Parker: Update (continued)

The outcome of the hearing was that the goal for Katie would continue to be reunification – return to custody of parent, guardian or other custodian. It was ordered that reasonable efforts would continue to be offered to Ms. Parker. If Ms. Parker did not make significant progress within the next 6 months according to the concurrent plan, Katie's goal would be changed to adoption and the agency would begin the adoption process with the Fitzgerald's.

Maternal grandmother would continue to be a visitation resource for Katie.

8 Month Update

The caseworker (Vernon) tried to get Jennifer financial assistance to help pay for her cell phone payments, so that she could call Katie. He was unable to get authorization for this type of assistance for Jennifer through his agency. Vernon also found an available parenting class that was at a more convenient time and bus route for her, but Jennifer has made a number of excuses and, so far, has not gone. Despite her lack of phone service and her reluctance to attend parenting classes, Jennifer seems to be doing better. She is complying with her visitation plan, and seems upbeat and focused during her visits with Katie and her meetings with Vernon. She reports that she finally resolved things with the drug dealer to whom she owed money and feels like a weight has been lifted from her shoulders. Jennifer and Fitzgerald's have developed a positive relationship and they talk about Katie's achievements and needs before or after visits.

Katie continued to visit with her grandmother who is now in a relationship with a 65 year old gentleman, Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith is healthy. He supports himself with his pension and social security payment. He moved in with Mrs. Parker 2 months ago. Prior to moving in and being a part of the visits Vernon conducted a thorough assessment of Mr. Smith. He also observed several visits to determine if Mr. Smith would be a positive support that could ensure Katie's safety. Katie was shy at first but now enjoys playing games with Mr. Smith. Mrs. Parker has now requested to be considered as a placement for Katie. She has requested that Katie be removed from her foster home so she can reside with her and Mr. Smith. Jennifer has expressed she would also like to see Katie moved. Grandmom acknowledges that it is Mr. Smith that allows her to have the resources to take care of Katie. If he were not around, she knows she could not provide full-time care for Katie.

The Fitzgerald's continue to state that, if needed, they can be a permanent resource for Katie. They have become very attached to her.

Katie Parker: 8 Month Update (continued)

Decision Points

Should Katie be moved to her grandmothers?

Why move Katie?

Why should Katie not be moved?

What is your final decision? Why?