

FAMILY CASE STUDY

FAMILY INFORMATION:

Father	Jerry Floyd	Age:	32
Father's Paramour	Valerie Caldwell	Age:	35
Mother	Skipper Floyd	Age:	32
Child	Jerry Floyd, Jr.	Age:	15
Child	Lester Caldwell	Age:	11
Child	Mary Floyd	Age:	11
Child	Ralph Floyd	Age:	8
Child	Milton Floyd	Age:	6
Child	Lori Floyd	Age:	1 yr. 8 mos.

FAMILY HISTORY

Jerry Floyd (32 year old white male) was married to Skipper (32 year old white female) in 1993. They met in high school. Skipper was pregnant with Jerry Jr. at the time of their marriage. Although they remain legally married, they have been estranged from one another for the past two years. Off and on during their thirteen year marriage, Jerry has had a relationship with Valerie Caldwell. Valerie has an eleven year old son, Lester that resulted from a relationship with a man other than Jerry.

On February 17, 2007 at 11:30pm, it was reported to local law enforcement that two young children were observed walking along a secondary highway, toward a small town in rural Missouri. They were six miles from town, having walked a distance of approximately one mile from their home. Law Enforcement officials picked up the children, who were identified as Mary and Ralph Floyd, ages 11 and 8. The children were cold, frightened, dirty, and soaking wet. It had been raining lightly that evening. They reported that they were running away from home because their Mother's boyfriend, Joe, was "drunk" and "high" and was "tearing the house apart". A call was made to the Children's Division and child protection authorities made an immediate investigation to the home. As a result; Lori, Milton, Ralph, Mary, and Jerry Jr. were taken into emergency protective custody early in the morning on February 18, 2007. The children were placed into three different foster homes. A home study has been conducted on Jerry Floyd, the children's father.

After a thorough investigation of the home of Skipper Floyd, the following allegations were substantiated and subsequently adjudicated:

- Jerry Jr., Mary, Ralph, Milton and Lori have been subjects of physical neglect including lack of food, lack of supervision and unsafe living conditions.
- Methamphetamine, marijuana and drug paraphernalia were found lying on the coffee table at the time law enforcement entered the home on February 17, 2007.
- Mary, Ralph, and Milton report having witnessed their Mother and Joe Johnson using drugs and becoming intoxicated to the point they could not adequately supervise or provide care for the children on numerous occasions.

- There is evidence that Jerry Jr. has often walked a quarter mile to the neighbors reporting they he and his siblings were locked out of their house and asking if he and his siblings could stay at their house and have something to eat.
- Joe Johnson is reported by Mary and Ralph to have hit their mother numerous times in the recent past, giving her black eyes. He has hit her in the face and made her nose bleed numerous times. Skipper Floyd was observed by law enforcement to have deep scratches on her face and a bruise under her eye at the time the children were taken into emergency protective custody.

Joe Johnson has been arrested twice on domestic assault charges alleged by a previous woman with whom he briefly lived three years ago. He was never charged due to refusal of the woman to testify against him.

Milton Floyd has reported to the Children's Division investigator that Joe does "bad" things to Mary and Lori. Milton will not further elaborate on what "bad" things happened.

Skipper Floyd and Joe Johnson were arrested and placed in county jail on February 19, 2007. They remain in jail awaiting trial on charges of criminal child abuse and neglect and possession of drugs. The Children's Division is continuing to learn more about the abuse that the children were subjected to, although it has not been determined what Milton refers to as "bad" things being done to his sisters by Joe. Mary denies any abuse of any kind by Joe. She will only say that she does not like him and she wishes her Mommy did not like him. She becomes withdrawn when questioned any further. She and her siblings are receiving therapy at this time to assist them in dealing with the stress of being separated from their Mother, assisting them to adjusting to their new living situation, and in helping sort out what has happened to them. The Children's Division is hopeful that the therapist will be able to develop a relationship of trust and that more can be learned about the extent to which the children were abused/neglected.

Jerry Jr. is also very protective of his mother and will say very little about what happened in the home. He has talked about Joe "beating my Mom" and that he hates Joe. The children all miss their mother and worry about her. Their paternal grandfather has taken the children to visit her in Jail once.

Their father, Jerry, and his paramour, Valerie, live in rural southwest Missouri. His home is a ramshackle trailer that is set on property that has been passed down from Jerry's grandfather. Valerie's 11 year old son, Lester, (by another relationship) lives with Jerry and Valerie. Jerry's father lives on the same property in another very run down mobile home. Jerry's mother is estranged from his father at this time. The yard is full of discarded and broken machinery, chickens and roosters roam around, an old and unhealthy looking horse is kept in a fenced area near the house, and there are numerous dogs. There is no grass and the yard is very rocky. The one bathroom in the home is extremely filthy. The plumbing sometimes does not work and the toilet is often backed up. The children report that they use "outside" as a toilet when this happens. Jerry's sister lives nearby and her children are also often visiting. Milton is very close to his grandfather and he, in the past, has stayed at Grandfather's when visiting.

Jerry Sr. has been incarcerated three times for petty theft, vandalism and drugs. He has been sober for sixteen months after completing court ordered drug treatment when he was arrested for possession of cocaine. His probation officer reports that he feels Jerry is serious about remaining sober and that Jerry appears to be very committed to maintaining the terms of his probation. He has been working steadily at the same construction job for the past year. He reports that he likes his job and wants to keep it. Prior to custody being taken, the children had been visiting Jerry more frequently since he has become sober and was out of prison. Jerry wants to have his children placed with him and he is open and communicative about the fact that he does need assistance and support in raising them. While the children have been in foster care, Jerry has had two overnight visits with the children. He admits that he gets frustrated that the children "don't mind" him. His parenting style is to be permissive for a period of time until the children become so out of control that he screams at them or uses corporal punishment. He admits he has a short temper. He does appear to have a close bond with the children and they do with him. Although they miss their mother, they report and appear to be happy visiting with their father.

Valerie Caldwell is Jerry's on again, off again paramour. She and her son Lester are living with Jerry at this time in a three bedroom, dilapidated mobile home. The children refer to Valerie as "Mom" and appear to relate to her as a mother figure. They are noticeably distressed during times that she "takes off". She does this after she and Jerry have loud arguments, but she usually returns in a few days, although she has left for up to a month. Disputes often involve a chronic lack of money to pay bills.

For summer recreation the family goes to a nearby river to swim and camp.

Concerns of the Children's Division include Jerry's discipline style and tendency to become overwhelmed with the needs of his children, the run down condition of the home and yard, the turbulent and unstable relationship between Jerry and Valerie, psychological stress and guilt experienced by Mary and Ralph for having told the police what was occurring in their home, anger at Mary and Ralph from Jerry Jr. for having "told on Mom", and the emotional strain of being separated from their mother.

Authorities are particularly concerned about Ralph who is very thin, pale and has dark circles under his eyes. Examination by a pediatrician shows no serious health issues other than evidence of poor nutrition. His foster parents report he has a poor appetite and does not sleep well. He takes on a great deal of responsibility and concern for his siblings.

Jerry Jr. is given a great deal of child care responsibilities and he appears to be handling it well. When visiting their father, Jerry Jr. takes primary care of the children while his father and Valerie are at work. The grandfather is nearby if needed. The children are often found to be extremely dirty and running around barefoot in the yard. They do appear to be happy and well-fed, although meals are not always the most nutritionally sound. Biscuits and gravy, potato soup and ramen noodles are staples in the home. The children continue to be monitored by a pediatrician and therapist and except for Ralph, appear to be achieving developmental milestones and are inside normal ranges for their height and weight.

The culture of this family involves a commune-like style of living. The family often "takes in" friends and their children who will stay for awhile and then move on. Adult

friends visit almost daily and stay for extended periods of time. Neighbors and relatives assist in child caring, but it is done very informally. Sometimes the children will congregate at a neighbor's when Jerry and Valerie are "between paydays" and run low on food. Neighbors will readily invite the children for meals and this is shared among all the neighbors. Neighbor children are frequently invited to eat with the Floyd's when their parents are low on food. Little attention is paid to the hygiene of the children or to the maintenance of the house. Jerry Jr. appears to have most of the responsibility for cleaning while visiting. He enlists and directs the support of his siblings in that endeavor. For the family, "cleaning" means picking up toys, clothes and other household things and putting them away. Valerie jokes that the best way to get the children clean is to take them to the river. The family routinely takes soap with them swimming. Relationships with friends and family are highly valued. Boundaries are very loose and friends and neighbor children enter the house without knocking. The children fall asleep in various places around the house and other children often sleep at the house. Jerry most often greets the Children's Division with no shirt, casually displaying his nipple rings and tattoos. There is very much the culture of the working poor in rural Missouri.

The children have recently started seeing a therapist.

A family support team meeting has been scheduled. A decision needs to be made as to whether or not the children can be placed with their father. Everyone involved seems to have a different opinion. A Children's Division licensing worker has conducted a home study on Jerry and Valerie and it is her recommendation that the children be placed with their father on a 30 day trial home visit. The licensing worker is most concerned about Jerry's capability to care for Lori, the youngest of the children. She feels that with the right support and guidance and Jerry can be successful at raising the kids.