

Turning Points for Children Training
Social Workers and the Law
By Ellie Kreidie

The Jones' Family

Children:

Lucia Jones, age 3 months

Marley Jones, age 4 years

Chase Jones, age 6 years

Mother:

Susanne Jones, age 25 years. Works two jobs, employed at local grocery store working 40 hours a week and employed 20 hours a week cleaning a business building during the night.

Father:

Wilson Jones, age 27 years. Believed to be involved with illegal drug activity, has been in and out of jail for the past 8 years.

Purpose of Today's Hearing: Adjudication Hearing to determine if the children are neglect.

Background

The police got a call at 3:15 am a week ago, from Amy Valdez, a 42 year old teacher at the neighborhood elementary school, who complained about a possible case of neglect in the house next door (the Jones'). Ms. Valdez informed the police that at around 7 o'clock, the eldest child Chase knocked on her door asking for a package of mac'n'cheese. Mrs. Valdez got a box of Kraft mac'n'cheese and gave it to Chase before asking how Susanne (the mother) and the new baby Lucia were doing. Mrs. Valdez described to police that Chase shrugged his shoulders and said, "The baby is good but mommy isn't home." Mrs. Valdez looked at the street and saw that Ms. Jones' car was not parked outside of the house (which it usually is when he is there), she then asked Chase if his dad was home with him and Chase said no. Mrs. Valdez asked if any adults were with him and his sisters and Chase said no. Mrs. Valdez then decided to stay with Chase and his sisters in their house and wait until their parents returned.

Mrs. Valdez said to police that there had been many times before that she and her husband cared for the kids as they knew that the Jones', especially Susanne, had difficulties with caring for the kids while working two jobs. Susanne had always asked Mrs. Valdez beforehand if she could watch the kids in those instances, however. Mrs. Valdez made dinner for the kids and read to them before putting them to sleep at 8:15 pm. Mrs. Valdez called her husband Frank, over after the kids were asleep and the two of them stayed up waiting for Susanne and Wilson to return (they had already tried calling and texting them throughout the night). It wasn't until 3 in the morning, that a car pulled up outside of the house and Susanne and Wilson exited the vehicle with both yelling at

one another. Mr. and Mrs. Valdez make themselves outside before the Jones' make it to the door and tell them that the kids are all in bed. The Jones' stop their arguing and thank them, saying they both were out working late (though Mrs. Valdez notes the two smell of alcohol and slur their words). The Valdez return home but as they try to go to sleep, they hear screaming from next door and children crying. Mrs. Valdez decides to call the police reporting neglect. Within twenty minutes, the police arrive at the Jones' house and find the three kids crying and both their parents yelling while drunk. The police decide to take the children out of the house and bring them to a foster family.

The children have been with the foster family for a week, with the police believing that due to the past record of the father and the situation that occurred week earlier, that the children were subject to neglect. As there are no other family members who the court considered able to take care of the children (based on criminal records and questionable employment), the court have filed to permanently move the children out of their parents custody and to foster care.

During this time, a state issued social worker does a survey of the Jones' parenting based on a tour of the Jones' home, interview with both parents, and interview with neighbors, close friends, and family members. The social worker finds that the house is in fine shape, there have been no other instances of neglect or abuse reported by those interviewed, and that both of the parents showcase only love for their children and for each other. The social worker also concludes in their findings that the children love their parents and state no possible instance of neglect by their parents. The social worker concludes that it would be best for the kids.

Objective: While roleplaying this trial, work to better understand all sides of the courtroom and the law in these cases.

Roles

Lawyers

State Lawyers - who argue that the Jones' kids should be permanently put in foster care

Mr. and Mrs. Jones Lawyers - who argue that the parents should continue to have full custody of their children

Individuals to Testify

Mrs. Valdez

Susanne Jones

Wilson Jones

Social Worker

Judge (to oversee the arguments and control the courtroom)

Schedule of Trial

Mrs. Valdez to the stand

State Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Jones' Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Susanne Jones to the stand

State Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Jones' Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Wilson Jones to the stand

State Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Jones' Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Social Worker to the stand

State Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Jones' Lawyers - 10 minutes to ask questions

Judge gives their findings and advice based on the facts