

Buddy's Story

Buddy is a 13-year-old African-American male who has a history of abuse in his natural home by his mother's live-in boyfriend, James; parental rights have not been terminated. His mother and her boyfriend claim that Buddy has been recently aggressive, and they are having difficulty with discipline for Buddy. Currently, Buddy is staying with a friend and his family, but his behavior has been sporadic, and the friend's mother is sometimes afraid of his temper.

Buddy's mother, his mother's boyfriend James, and his 9-year-old sister all live in the home. His maternal grandmother, who Buddy is very fond of, does not live in the same home but helps occasionally with childcare and finances. Buddy's father left the family shortly after his sister was born, when Buddy was five, and Buddy has not seen his father at all since he was 6. Buddy's mother works full time as a waitress; she says she wants Buddy to return home as soon as possible. Her boyfriend has lived with Buddy and his family for the last three years; he works as a painter only sporadically and is believed to use alcohol and drugs in the home and elsewhere.

Buddy's mother reports that he usually gets along reasonably well with peers but rarely gets along with adults, especially her boyfriend. She does not acknowledge or deny abuse by her boyfriend but grudgingly acknowledges that she does not think it will work for Buddy to live at home until "he can get along better with my boyfriend." She feels frustrated with both of them but does not seem very optimistic that her boyfriend will change. Buddy thinks it would be a good idea for his mother's boyfriend to leave but says he wishes he could return home. He wishes that he liked her boyfriend, but doesn't. He reports that he has seen his mother's boyfriend hit his mother and that he yells a lot when he is mad, especially when he's mad at him or his sister. He does not really think that his mother will make her boyfriend leave so that he can go home. He believes that his mother loves him and his sister very much. The team suspects that his mother's boyfriend may verbally and/or physically abuse her.

Buddy has had problems with fighting at school and has been suspended repeatedly. Between ages 9 and 13, he started at least two fires and vandalized his school. He was adjudicated delinquent and received probation for the vandalism. He is still on juvenile probation. He was diagnosed ADHD at age 9 and has taken Ritalin off and on. He is behind in school but manages to do fairly well when he is on his medication. He has not been reevaluated for ADHD since the original diagnosis and is not currently being followed by any medical person. He does not have any other known health problems.

Buddy has a full-scale IQ of 85 and shows good reasoning skills when he is not angry. He is classified as "special needs" but has always been in a regular classroom. He has never failed a grade and is in the 8th grade but reads at a 5th grade level. He says he hates school. His teacher says that he gets along well with most other students, especially in small groups, and even better 1:1. Buddy has been suspended twice in the last year for fighting at school and threatens assaultive behavior at school approximately once a week. His school attendance has always been regular except for when suspended. His academic performance has been better when spending his time at school in in-school suspension. Buddy's Juvenile Court Counselor, caseworker, and teacher view his problems as hyperactivity, not being cooperative with adults, not following rules and laws, and having mistrust of adults. The team recognizes the family issues that contribute to these problems, but the mother does not acknowledge them.

At his friend's home, Buddy says the mother of the household favors the other children in the home and that "makes me lose my temper." The friend's mother reported that he "demands" a lot of special attention and "does not cooperate" with them, live up to their rules and behavioral expectations, or accept their discipline. He

says the father is “meaner” than the mother. He views his “temper” as his main problem that gets him in trouble.

The peers with whom Buddy hangs out with encourage him to “act tough” and drink. He says that he drinks with his friends, but only on weekends, and he denies other drug use. Recently his friend’s parents only allow him to see these friends at school. He denies sexual activity. There is no information that is inconsistent with his reports about sex or alcohol/other drug use.

Buddy likes working with his hands. He especially enjoys working on cars and wants to be a mechanic. He describes himself as “kind of good at fixing things.” His mother reports that he is musical and sings well, but he has never been involved in music in any formal way. He is overweight and is not athletic. Neither Buddy nor other family members are involved in church or other community groups/activities. The family Buddy resides with takes him to church; he likes the youth minister.

Buddy says he believes that he can read “well enough” and that what they try to make him learn and do at school will not help him become a mechanic and have a cool car of his own. He does think about the future and believes that things will work out OK if he tries hard. He has nowhere to go when he leaves the receiving home and says, “If I can’t live at home, I don’t care what they do with me.” He misses his mother, sister, and grandmother and says he has mixed feeling about the supervised weekly visits he has had with them.

Buddy’s Strengths

- Buddy has hope for the future and plans to be a mechanic.
- Buddy is good with his hands and likes fixing things.
- Buddy loves his family and feels loved by them.
- Buddy’s favorite food is pizza.
- Buddy can get along with peers, especially 1:1.
- Buddy is musical and likes to sing.
- Buddy had his own room when he lived at home.
- His mother’s boyfriend secretly enjoys cooking, which the children enjoy.
- Buddy likes the youth minister.
- Buddy performs well academically in in-school suspension.
- Buddy has done well when on medication for his ADHD.
- He has threatened violence but has not acted on it in the past two years at school.

Family and Community Strengths

- Grandmother has financial and other resources
- Mother works as a waitress
- The Court Counselor and the school are all actively involved and communicating.
- There has been a family willing to take Buddy in.

Questions to consider when identifying needed skills and developing “lesson plans”:

- 1. What resources are available to you?**
- 2. What skills would be most beneficial to begin working on?**
- 3. Explain an activity that would help to address a skill.**
- 4. Explain an activity that can help reinforce the identified strengths/protective factors.**