



For Children in Need of Permanent Homes

Meet the People We Help...

Problem

In the three years after her daughter Emily was born, Carrie experienced increasingly more acute symptoms of her schizophrenia. Those symptoms left Carrie unable to care for her daughter, who often had to fend for herself when she was hungry. Carrie's sister, Claudia, and her husband, Mark, stepped in as de facto caregivers for the girl and wanted to bring her into their home permanently. As Mark and Claudia moved through the adoption process, Mark developed a terminal illness, which introduced a new set of psychological issues to everyone involved.

Solution

Claudia was reluctant to discuss Mark's prognosis with Emily because of her age and because she had experienced such turmoil in her life already. The FHC caseworker, JoAnn, knew that Emily sensed something was wrong, so JoAnn encouraged Claudia to talk to Emily in terms that were appropriate for her age. JoAnn also helped Claudia prepare for that conversation.

Outcome

Claudia did tell Emily that her uncle was very sick and that there was little chance that he was going to get better. JoAnn spent several counseling sessions with Emily to help her process her emotions. After Mark passed away, JoAnn worked with Claudia and Emily to help both of them deal with their grief. Because Emily had talked little about "losing" her mother, these general discussions about grief presented an opportunity for Emily to work out those feelings as well.