

Module #10 Openness in Adoption

Handout #10.3 Considering Openness

Scenario #1. Marika and Errol Baker are planning to adopt 12 year old James from foster care. James entered foster care at age 10 as a result of his mother's significant mental health issues. His mother, Shakira, has been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. She believed that her children would be taken away from her by people whose voices she was hearing constantly. She irregularly took the medication prescribed for her. One night, she attempted to poison James and his sister Jamira to save them from the voices. Shakira's sister lives next door and checked in on the family as she frequently did, discovered the children in distress, and phoned for an ambulance. The children were hospitalized and then placed in foster care. Shakira was placed in a state-operated psychiatric facility where she continues to be treated. Her rights and that of James' and Jamira's father (who had abandoned the family many years before) were terminated by the court. The Bakers are planning to adopt James; another family will adopt Jamira.

- Should openness be considered in this case as between James and Jamira and their birth mother? Why or why not?
- Should openness be a consideration in other contexts? Why or why not?

Scenario #2. Lilly entered foster care at age 13 after being sexually abused by her stepfather. Her mother refused to believe that her husband had sexually abused her daughter. The stepfather was arrested and was able to meet bail pending trial. During the work with the family, the mother refused to meet or speak with Lilly until Lilly admitted that the sexual abuse did not happen. Lilly's cousin, Amanda, age 27, however, came forward to support her. She told the child welfare agency that she had no doubt that Lilly had been sexually abused and confided that she herself was sexually abused as an 8 year old by an uncle. Amanda states that she wants to take care of Lilly and protect her. After several months of attempted work with the mother (the stepfather was eventually convicted of sexual assault and incarcerated), the agency cannot recommend reunification as the mother continues to reject Lilly. The mother's rights are terminated. Lilly's biological father is deceased and the stepfather did not adopt her. The plan is for Amanda to adopt Lilly.

- Should openness be a consideration in this case? Why or why not?