

Reflecting on Abuse and Neglect

Braden and Bethany's Story: Part 5

Based on what you learned in this lesson and throughout this course, write a different ending for the Miller family. At each critical point in the family's story, think about what *could* have happened to change the family's trajectory. Describe the resources, supports, or conversations that might have made a difference for the Miller family. Try to think very specifically about what you could do for families in your program if any of these events occurred.

Date	Critical Event	What actions or community resources might have changed the story? What could have been done differently to support the family?
1 July	Braden (age 9) and Bethany (age 11) go to live with the Miller family as foster children. They join two biological children, Caleb (age 12) and Jonah (age 15), and a toddler who has been adopted by the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support group for foster parents or blended families</i> • <i>Help with building secure, attached relationships between adults and children</i> • <i>Help with building positive relationships amongst the children and youth in the home</i> • <i>Counseling or therapy groups to help all of the family members deal with the stress of the transition</i> • <i>Classes or support groups focused on parenting pre-teens and/or foster children</i> • <i>Information about positive guidance strategies and positive youth development</i> • <i>Support from a social worker or other agency familiar with the family</i>
23 July	Melinda Miller posts on her blog about the "war" in her home and using discipline to help children overcome their "evil."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This could have been seen as a sign that help was needed. A social worker or other person responsible for supporting the family might have noticed tendencies towards harsh punishment or signs of mental stress in the family and taken action.</i> • <i>The supports mentioned in the first row could be useful here.</i>
28 August	Max sees Caleb intimidate Braden. Max discusses his concerns with management,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Coordinated systems might have helped professionals see patterns of stress in the</i>

	and the manager recommends monitoring Caleb's behavior more closely and to note any comments that might indicate a reasonable suspicion of abuse.	<i>families' behavior and referred the family or the child for additional supports even if child abuse was not evident at that time</i>
8 Sept	Bethany tells a friend that she has been beaten by her oldest foster brother. The friend tells her mother, and the mother calls Melinda Miller. Bethany is out of school for a week and begins avoiding her friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The friend's mother might have made a report of suspected child abuse. This conversation should have started the chain of events leading to an investigation.</i> • <i>This might have been the event that helped the family get the supports they needed.</i>
1 Oct	Neighbors hear a child crying for an hour and call the police.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This could have been a trigger for additional supports for the family around guidance and positive youth development.</i>
13 Oct	Bethany confesses to Sasha about the "obedience tests" that have become sexual. Sasha makes a report to FAP and law enforcement. After an investigation, Melinda and Derrick Miller are arrested. All five children are removed from the home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If all the changes described above had taken place, this moment might have been prevented.</i>