

## Conseco/Velasquez Case Summary

*Note: Many details of the case, such as the process of a family meeting and development of a safety plan, have been condensed or omitted from this summary for reasons of space.*

### **Referral: 05-01-04, 10:40 a.m.**

An emergency room nurse reports that they are treating a 6-week-old infant, Madelyn Velasquez, for diarrhea. She requires immediate rehydration and will be admitted to the hospital. The infant has not had any medical follow-up or immunizations since her birth. Dr. Fried has examined the baby and states that he is concerned about the infant's weight (7 lb., 10 oz., which is below the fifth percentile), an inappropriate and inadequate feeding pattern, and potentially harmful sleeping arrangements. The doctor is prescribing several follow-up medical tests over the next several days to rule out organic causes for her weight, but with the history, he believes there is at least a component of neglect.

Child Victim: Madelyn Velasquez, DOB 3-19-04  
Mother: Maria Conseco  
Father: Jorge Velasquez  
Siblings: None  
Agency History: No California history

### **05-01-04, 12:10 p.m.**

The worker interviewed Maria at the medical center. She appears very anxious that the baby's father has not returned. Maria describes the past six weeks as "fun." She and Jorge have mostly stayed with friends, and they have taken good care of Madelyn.

Regarding feeding, Maria said she feeds the baby every time they eat, three times a day. Madelyn usually takes a full 12-ounce bottle, which sometimes has baby applesauce or cereal in it as well. Maria reports using whatever formula is available at her friends' homes or buying ready-made formula at a local store. If she is out of formula, she gives Madelyn water or apple juice. Two days ago, the baby started to have diarrhea, and Maria doesn't understand why.

While at friends' homes, they usually slept on a sofa bed. She assured the worker that there were plenty of pillows and blankets and that Madelyn was safe and secure, sleeping under the blankets on a pillow right between her and Jorge. In the car, she placed Madelyn on the floor in the back seat, and Maria slept on the back seat while Jorge slept on the front passenger seat. They do not have a car seat.

**Discussion with Dr. Fried:** Dr. Fried reports that Madelyn has been rehydrated after two days of diarrhea, and that most parents would have known to seek medical advice sooner. Madelyn's birth weight was 7 lb., 4 oz., which was nearly at the 50th percentile. The amount of food being offered to Madelyn was insufficient; even more problematic was that Madelyn was offered three large meals—she would have been very hungry, so she probably took in more than she could handle at once. It appears likely that, after further testing, Madelyn will be diagnosed with malnourishment. He is also concerned about the sleeping arrangements being dangerous for suffocation or SIDS.

The worker informed Maria that further testing is necessary to determine if Madelyn's low weight has an organic cause. Maria was also told that Madelyn is in need of care and supervision that Maria appears unable to provide. Upon hearing that, Maria asked to call her mother, Lucy Conseco, who agreed to come directly to meet with the worker and Maria at the medical center. Maria was visibly shaken upon realizing that Madelyn's weight and diarrhea may be because of what she and Jorge were doing.

On arrival, the maternal grandmother, Lucy Conseco, reported that her daughter just turned 18. She states that Jorge, the father of the baby, is 37. Lucy has been upset at Maria ever since she started dating Jorge. Lucy reports no knowledge of substance abuse or domestic violence in their relationship. Maria had been living at home, but she has been missing since three weeks before the baby's due date.

Lucy requested that Maria and Madelyn be allowed to come home with her. She would provide feeding supplies and be sure that Madelyn is fed as much as she needs. Maria stated enthusiastically that she would agree to go to her mother's and do whatever she had to do if she could keep Madelyn. Maria very reluctantly agreed not to allow contact between Jorge and Madelyn until the worker had an opportunity to interview Jorge. Maria promised that she would be a good mother to Madelyn, and she would make sure that Madelyn is brought to the medical center for testing and immunizations. Maria and her mother agreed to the worker's suggestion of having a Visiting Nurse Association representative visit the home for a period of one month or until Madelyn's weight was appropriate. An aunt and uncle offered to provide any transportation to medical and other appointments, to serve as interpreters when necessary, and to support their family in whatever way they could.

**Continued Assessment/Investigation:** The worker and Nurse Logan met with Maria to instruct her on proper feeding techniques. Maria was attentive, asked good questions, and was able to repeat the instructions back. They also discussed safe sleeping arrangements, which Maria understood. Maria was given a seven-day supply of formula and doctor's orders for follow-up testing to begin the next day.

The home is tiny but exceptionally clean and neat. Lucy's income source is SSI, which she receives as a result of physical disabilities she suffered from domestic violence by her husband, Ramondo Conseco. Both Maria and Lucy were subjected to physical violence by Mr. Conseco, and Maria was sexually abused by him as well. Lucy and Maria fled after a particularly brutal domestic violence incident about five years ago, in which Lucy was injured. She did file a restraining order against him. They do not know his current whereabouts, and they believe he does not know theirs. Maria said that she sometimes used to see Rose, a counselor at the community cultural center, to talk about her father and the nightmares she has because of him.

Lucy reports that Maria was an excellent student before she met and began seeing Jorge about one year ago. Maria has only a few months of school left before graduating from high school. Lucy will care for Madelyn while Maria is in school.

**05-08-04: Call to medical center, home visit, visit with Rose at the community cultural center, DMV check, and criminal check**

A call to the medical center revealed that testing ruled out organic causes for Madelyn's low weight and led to a final diagnosis of malnutrition due to neglect. Maria has cooperated with all testing and recommendations. Madelyn appears to be doing well and has already gained ten ounces. Maria and Jorge were substantiated for neglect of Madelyn.

At the home visit, Maria reported that she was providing the primary care for Madelyn (with Lucy's help). The visiting nurse did an assessment, and she will be coming twice a week for two weeks, then once a week for two weeks. During an evaluation of Maria's knowledge and understanding of child development, a number of deficits were identified, and the visiting nurse recommended that Maria attend child development classes for new parents.

Maria states she has not heard from Jorge, but that he was reportedly seen at the cultural center and was asking about her. Maria states that she and her mother have argued a few times over Maria going out with friends, because her mother is afraid she will be seeing Jorge. Maria also stated that they sometimes argue about the clothes she wears. Maria would like the worker to speak to her mother about her old-fashioned ideas and get her mother to adopt more American ways.

Maria admitted to smoking marijuana before she was pregnant, but says that she stopped years ago. She reported that she had begun using pot when she started high school, but her cousin, Anna, helped her find a group at the local community center to help her quit. Lucy states that she has never used drugs or alcohol.

**Mother's history:** Maria reluctantly admitted to her father's sexual and physical abuse. She reports frequent horrible nightmares in which he finds her and her mother and shoots them both. Maria said she used to sleep better after she had talked to Rose at the community cultural center about the nightmares. When asked why she stopped seeing the counselor, Maria said her mother would hassle her for talking to someone outside of the family, and told Maria that the nightmares would go away if she would just forget about it.

The worker met with Rose, who is a counselor at the center. She is a licensed master's level social worker who is employed by the center to meet the needs of the community. She diagnosed Maria with post-traumatic stress disorder. They primarily worked on her nightmares and the fears she experiences when she sees anyone who reminds her of her father. Rose was also working with Maria on her fear of being alone, which has led to Maria making poor choices in boyfriends. Rose is well aware of Lucy's reluctance to have Maria attend counseling, and that was the reason for Maria's early discharge.

**05-17-04: Call to the Visiting Nurse Association**

The nurse assigned to Madelyn's care stated that she is developing nicely. Her weight gain continues, and she is beginning to make her developmental milestones. Maria has yet to call to schedule the child development classes.

**05-25-04**

Maria called the worker and was very upset. Jorge called her and told her that he does not want anything to do with her anymore. He has learned that he is not going to be in trouble because Maria was 17 when they started dating, but he misses his wife and already has a child. He wants to take responsibility for Madelyn and will agree to take a paternity test and pay child support, but he does not want to have further contact with Maria or Madelyn. The worker could hear Lucy in the background saying things like, “Good riddance,” and “I told you he would not stand by you.” Maria is upset with her mother. She will stay with her mother and make the best of it, but she will start working toward being able to get out on her own. Maria also learned that she will not be able to graduate until next year because she has missed so much school. She is thinking about dropping out and just getting a GED.

**05-29-04: Meeting with Maria and Lucy to discuss the development of the case plan**

Maria told the worker she continues to ask her mother to stop bringing up Jorge and speaking badly of him. Lucy said she will stop talking about Jorge when he starts helping with his daughter’s expenses. Lucy and Maria had a recent conflict regarding Maria going to a dance at the community cultural center. Maria states she needs to go because she does not want to be without a boyfriend to protect her in case her father finds them and tries to abuse her again. Lucy thinks this is all very silly and that Maria should spend her time with her baby, stay away from boys, go to church, and dress more appropriately.