

EXAMPLES OF USE OF SDM® FINDINGS IN JURISDICTION/ DISPOSITION REPORT SECTIONS

Social Study/Family Assessment

On January 9, 2019, a social study/family assessment and strengths and needs assessment was conducted during a child and family team meeting with Mariana Franco, a 31-year-old mother of three children, and members of her support network. Ms. Franco participated by telephone due to her incarceration in order to identify priority caregiver and child needs for the purpose of case planning to support the recommended goal of reunification. Efforts to connect the father, Ray Valdez, in the meeting by telephone were unsuccessful.

Ms. Franco is the only caregiver in her household due to the deportation of her partner and children's father, Ray Valdez. He was deported to Mexico five years ago following his arrest for drug trafficking. Ms. Franco and Mr. Valdez maintain their relationship by telephone and Skype. Both parents identify as Latino/a. Ms. Franco stated that they are of the Catholic faith but do not actively participate in church activities.

Ms. Franco stated that their undocumented immigration status has made it difficult for them to be a family and she has had limited support from her family and friends as a single parent in the past five years.

Ms. Franco reported she was born in Merced, California, and raised primarily by a single father from six years of age. She described her childhood as a positive one, but believed not having her mother involved in her life has had a negative effect on her life. She worries about the effect on her children that their father is unable to physically be part of their lives.

Ms. Franco attended school in Merced until the age of 16 when her father moved the family to Oxnard, California. She dropped out in the eleventh grade and did not graduate from high school.

In 2000, while working in Oxnard at the local fast food restaurant, Ms. Franco met her partner and the father of her children, Ray Valdez. That same year, she and Ray moved to Michoacán, Mexico, where they lived for about a year. In August 2001, she and Mr. Valdez moved to League City, Texas where they eventually married. The mother gave birth to her three children in Texas. The family resided in League City for about 10 years, until the father was deported to Mexico for drug trafficking.

During their decade in Texas, Ms. Franco stated that she and Mr. Valdez struggled increasingly with intimate partner violence, but she always tried to protect her children from knowing about any physical violence. Ms. Franco stated that after Ray was deported, she and the children moved back to California to be near to her family.

Despite the family support, Ms. Franco reported she started using methamphetamine with friends she met in Merced as a result of the stresses of trying to support and care for her three children. At one point, she was arrested for petty theft for stealing food from her employer; she stated that she was desperate to feed her children.

During the family meeting, ten caregiver domains were assessed to identify priority needs and strengths in Ms. Franco's household. Key areas of need related to supporting a goal of reunification include resource management and basic needs, substance use, and social support system.

Key areas of caregiver strength in Ms. Franco's household that may be used to support a goal of reunification include parenting practices, cognitive abilities, and physical health.

Eleven child domains were assessed to identify priority needs for Sal, Jessie, and Carmel. These needs are outlined below in this report's evaluation of children section.

Efforts to assess caregiver needs and strengths in Mr. Valdez's household were unsuccessful as of the filing of this report. Efforts to contact "Desarrollo Integral De La Familia Nacional" (National Integral Development of Family or DIF) in his state in Mexico to request courtesy assistance in conducting this assessment were in progress as of the filing of this report.

Family's Strengths

Ms. Franco reported her strength as a mother is that she communicates with her children. In addition to communication, she likes to spend time with them. Her children like to be involved in sporting activities.

Family's Perception of Their Needs

Ms. Franco described her perception of her family needs as: she could benefit from a parenting class, counseling for her children, and needing more emotional support from her family.

Child(ren)

Regarding: Sal, Jessie, and Carmel

During the family team meeting, priority needs identified for Sal include education based upon lack of academic progress due to absences, trauma related to exposure to domestic violence, family relationships due to difficulties in maintaining relationship with their father, and lack of a sense of safety and security in their mother's care when she is using methamphetamine.

Strengths include social relationships associated with sports activities and their relationship with their substitute care provider since placement in out-of-home care.

Regarding

Medical: The children are receiving all necessary and appropriate services and are in good health.

Developmental: The children are all meeting their developmental milestones.

Educational: School records for Jessie, Carmel, and Sal are indicated as follows:

- Sal–37 unexcused absences, present 46 days
- Jessie–35 unexcused absences, present 50 days
- Carmel–47 unexcused absences, present 42 days

Mental & Emotional Status: The children have been adjusting well to their current foster home placement. The children will be screened through the Mental Health Assessment Team to rule out any current mental health concerns.

Visitation

Upon the mother's release from jail, Ms. Franco may visit four hours each week with her children under agency supervision. Once she is released, a family meeting with Ms. Franco and her network will be offered to develop a plan and schedule for reviewing and progressing visits to unsupervised as she makes progress in her case plan objectives. Liberalizing visitation will depend on the mother's ability to demonstrate that she can stay clean and sober and use her recovery skills to manage daily stresses so that she is physically and emotionally available and able to parent her children under supervision. At this time the mother has not had any visits due to her incarceration, and the county jail operations have made telephone visits difficult to schedule.

The father, Ray Valdez, was deported to Mexico five years ago and has not been available for visits with his children. Child Welfare Services will help to encourage visitation between the father and children through verbal, written, and Skype visits.

Assessment/Evaluation

The children, Sal, Jessie, and Carmel, are under the protection of the Juvenile Court in out-of-home care pending the court's decision related to jurisdiction and disposition as a result of safety threats related to Ms. Franco's arrest and inability to arrange safe care for her children, unsafe and hazardous household conditions, and the mother's inability to provide for the basic needs of the children related to sufficient food, hygiene, and school attendance.

The mother's household was assessed to be at high risk based upon prior history and involvement with Child Welfare, physically unsafe housing, primary caregiver substance use that interferes with family functioning, and primary caregiver's arrest history. Prior efforts to engage Ms. Franco in voluntary services have been unsuccessful.

The following worry statements have been discussed with Ms. Franco:

Child Welfare Services; the court; Ms. Franco; her children Sal, Carmel, and Jessie; and all of their support network are worried that, even though she loves her children very much, if Ms. Franco were to relapse and use methamphetamine and other drugs again that she might get arrested again and/or not be able to adequately take care of, supervise, and provide a safe home environment for her children.

Everyone is worried that, if this happens again, the children won't have a clean, safe, and stable home to live in; enough to eat; or be properly supervised in their interactions with each other and around people they don't know in the family home and, as a result, they might be emotionally or physically hurt again.

The following goal statement to support reunification was discussed with Ms. Franco:

In order for the children to be returned to her care in six months, Ms. Franco agrees to work with a network of friends, family, and professionals to show everyone that, because she is consistently staying clean and using her recovery and parenting skills, she is always able to provide physically and emotionally safe care and supervision for Sal, Carmel, and Jessie.

Ms. Franco agrees that she will consistently show everyone that she is providing a safe and stable home, enough to eat, and that she or another safe and responsible adult is always present to make sure the children are physically and emotionally safe in their interactions with each other, with others who visit or live in her home, and in the community, taking into consideration their maturity and behavioral needs. Ms. Franco agrees that she will show everyone that she can take the lead parental role in the family so that Sal and Carmel don't need to feel responsible for that role.

Case plan objectives for Ms. Franco will include demonstrating that she can:

- Provide a safe and stable home and enough self-sufficient legal income to meet the basic needs of her children. Mariana will always make sure that everyone living in the home is safe to be around her children.
- Stay clean and sober and use her recovery skills to manage daily stresses so that she is physically and emotionally available and able to parent her children. She will show everyone that she can and will use a plan for safe care of the children if she ever experiences a relapse.

- Stay connected to and reach out for support from family, friends, and professionals that help her to provide care and support for her children as a single parent.

Once an assessment of Mr. Valdez's household and caregiver strengths and needs has been conducted, specific goals and objectives will be developed. For now, the key case plan objective for Mr. Valdez states that he will:

- Contact and participate with DIF in his community to complete safety, risk, and strengths and needs assessments of his household and follow recommendations of this assessment. (Updated case plan objectives will be filed with the court when the assessment is completed.)

It is respectfully recommended that the children, Sal, Carmel, and Jessie, remain in out-of-home care and that the mother, Mariana Franco, and the father, Ray Valdez, participate in Family Reunification Services and visitation as outlined in the attached case plan dated January 21, 2019.