

Case Study 2

Julia is a social work intern at a local Family Services Agency. Over the course of the last six months, she has worked with Carla Rodriguez to reunify her with her three children, ages 11, 4, and 3. Carla (age 28) is the mother of Tatiana (age 11), Derrick (age 4), and Angel (age 3). The children were removed to foster care when charges of neglect were substantiated. Derrick and Angel were placed in separate foster homes, and Tatiana stayed with Carla's sister. Carla's drug addiction limited her ability to care for her children, who were found to be living in squalid conditions. While the children were in foster care, Carla made a concerted effort to have the children returned to her care. She entered and completed a drug treatment program, and claims now to be "completely drug free." Carla entered similar programs twice before; this is the first time she completed a program. The children were reunified with their mother two months ago. Carla has been drug free for a number of months and is meeting the standards of care for her children.

In the field internship seminar, social work interns were exchanging information about their cases. An intern placed in a local junior high school asked her peers for advice about the group she is running. Taking precautions to change the names and identifying details of the group members, the intern spoke about "Mary's" fears about her family being broken up again "after they just got back together." Her mother isn't "doing the bad drugs anymore, but she smokes pot with her boyfriend in the apartment." "Mary" tells the group that her mother told her "not to say nothing to anybody" as she doesn't want to split up the family. "Mary" doesn't want her mother's social worker to find out about the drug use.

Julia, the intern working at the Family Services site, realizes that the client being described is the daughter of her client, Carla. Carla has adamantly denied any drug use and always appears sober and alert at the time of the agency visits. Julia has no firsthand evidence to suggest that Carla is using drugs. Julia wonders what to do with this information. What is your advice?