



Marcia Kennedy - LSCSW, LCP 316-371-7226 MKC-Services.com
654 N. Woodchuck - Suite F - Wichita, KS 67212

February 15, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I was made aware of the "attachment bill" by a colleague who shares the same concerns for our most vulnerable child population in the state of Kansas. As a clinician who has extensive training in attachment and trauma treatment, I have grave concerns about the agencies who are custodians of this vulnerable population. I am not certain if it is because they have not received training that is relevant to this area or if it is because there is some financial incentive to do business as usual. Either way, this needs to be investigated, addressed and rectified. It is a dire situation when the very agencies who are to protect children become complicit in their abuse.

Two situations come to mind, one recent and the other a few years ago. In the recent situation, one of the families I serve had a sibling group of two (both children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) where a disruption of foster/preadoptive placement was given on the older child who was physically and emotionally abusive to his younger sister (not to mention the other children in the home, the pet dog, and the destruction of a foster family's home). The contractor, in this case St. Francis, told the foster/adopt family that they will not do a sibling split and are trying to dictate therapists. The clinician they have chosen is "friendly" to their agenda and has had complaints made against their practice. Of course, there are more details, but the reality of this situation is that the older child who has many behaviors will be very difficult to place in an adoptive home if a sibling split occurs. Hence, the foster/adopt family that has the younger child is essentially under threat of losing the younger child, so that the two siblings can remain together. The fact is that may not be the most appropriate or optimal situation. It is abysmal that the agency abuses its power and authority for their own agenda rather than making hard decisions for the good of the children.

The other situation I mentioned occurred during a sibling split, as well. The child was diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder and not functioning well in a series of foster homes. In this situation, the case team was enmeshed with one another for purposes of their own agenda and personal relationships and made the decision to "start with a clean slate" which meant they removed the child from their foster home and switched therapists. I addressed this with the supervisor of the custodial agency, again St. Francis, who could not describe the theoretical model that she was using to make this heinous decision as it was contraindicated based upon my knowledge and training. I brought the issue up to the Assistant Director of Adoption who listened to my concerns, but no action was taken.

These uninformed practices are hurting children. In the past I have been called on to provide expert testimony and it is always in response to the idea that attachments are somehow interchangeable or

that sibling attachment trumps primary attachment with a caregiver. The reality is that we would NEVER ask a child to perform the tasks of safe adult. Unless of course, that child was willing to give up its childhood, have no behavioral concerns and be well regulated, able to be a safe presence for the child always, be attuned about 70% of the time, and have the resources to meet that child's basic needs. It is ridiculous that I would even have to say this out loud on a witness stand. Expecting an older child to do this for a younger child is like asking the blind to lead the blind. Yet for the custodial agencies this is their mindset.

The other issue is that children who come from hard places are often so dysregulated and have so many needs of their own, that by definition they would not be able to meet the requirement for providing a secure attachment to a younger sibling. Multiple siblings who have significant behavioral and mental health needs that are placed together can often tax even a high functioning, two parent household.

The two situations I have described are representative of my experience with the custodial agencies and those of my colleagues with whom I do consultation. There are entire fields devoted to the study of this and it is time that the custodial agencies are held to the knowledge and skills that are readily available in the area of trauma and attachment.

I wish I had time to write more, but I only found out about this opportunity yesterday evening and am writing my thoughts down before I begin work. Thank you for taking the time to consider my input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "d".

Marcia Kennedy, LSCSW, LCP

Trust Based Relational Intervention Practitioner
Certified Theraplay Therapist
Advanced Training in Adoption Competency
Somatic Experience Practitioner
EMDR trained