

SIGNS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:

CASE MODEL 1: Charlotte and Ned*

Charlotte, age 6, and Ned, age 5, were placed in foster care because of long-standing physical abuse and emotional neglect. Charlotte's and Ned's father left them in the care of their mother when Charlotte was 1½ years old and Ned was 6 months old. Their mother, Tammy, was 20 years old and unemployed. After two years of being on welfare and food stamps, Tammy got a job as a waitress. When Tammy had to work evenings, her current boyfriend would take care of the children. Tammy has had many different boyfriends over the years; however, she has been living with her most recent boyfriend for almost a year. He does not work and allegedly has a drug problem. Charlotte and Ned were frequently found home alone. The school noticed bruises on Charlotte and Ned and called Child Protective Services. It was determined that the children's life and health were in danger and that they could not be protected in the home, so they were placed in foster care.

Ms. Daton, foster mother, fixed up the room with bunk beds for Charlotte and Ned. She noted that they would usually be in the lower bunk bed together in the morning. She asked why they did not stay in their separate bunks, and they giggled and said they were scared of the dark. She put a night light in the room, but still would find them together in the morning. She became concerned when she noted that one morning they had taken off their pajamas. When she asked them about this, they again giggled and told her it was too hot in the room. Although the children seemed to need to be together, Ms. Daton was considering having Ned sleep in the room with her 16-year-old son.

One night as she passed their door, she heard them talking and entered the room and found both children naked. Charlotte was on her hands and knees with her buttocks up in the air, and Ned had his finger in Charlotte's anus. As Ms. Daton entered the room, she heard Ned say "Now, it's your turn to do it to me." When Ms. Daton questioned them about what they were doing and where they had learned it, they told her they had figured it out themselves.

Ms. Daton was also concerned because Charlotte seemed fearful of Mr. Daton and other men who came to visit.

* Adapted from Faller, K. C. *Sexual Abuse in Foster Family Care, Understanding Child Sexual Maltreatment*. California: Sage Publications, 1990.

What are the possible sexual signs of sexual abuse?

What are the possible nonsexual behavioral signs of sexual abuse?
