

**N.J. Division of Youth and Family Services
Individual and Family Assessment Plan-Adoption
Part B**

I. Child to be Adopted

Name: Susie Burke
Birthdate: November 1, 2002
Birthplace: Jersey City Medical Center, Jersey City, N.J.
Race: African-American
Sex: Female
Religion: Baptist

Susie is an adorable 2-year-old African-American girl. She has brown hair and brown eyes. She is an energetic toddler who enjoys interacting with adults and peers. She can be quite stubborn at times and gets time out on occasion. Susie enjoys playing with her toys and her sisters and brothers.

II. Birth and Developmental History

Susie was born in Jersey City Medical Center, Jersey City, New Jersey, on November 1, 2002, at 5:53 p.m. She was born full term by normal spontaneous vaginal delivery. She weighed 7 lbs. and 13 oz., and was 18 ½ inches long. Her Apgar score was 9 at 1 minute and 9 at 5 minutes. Her birth mother Donna was 42-years-old. She had no prenatal care. Mother and baby tested positive for opiates. Susie developed a fever on November 2nd, and was prescribed Ampicillin and Claforan. She had a lumbar puncture and cerebral spinal fluid and blood cultures were negative for any growth or organisms. Sepsis was ruled out and the antibiotics were discontinued on November 5th. Susie's umbilical stump site had to be cauterized due to tissue growth. She tested negative for HIV. She was diagnosed with Drug Withdrawal Syndrome and was started on Paregoric on November 4th to control her symptoms. She was switched from Paregoric to Phenobarbital on November 9th. She was treated with Phenobarbital until November 24, 2002. The Division filed for and was granted custody of Susie on December 1, 2002. She was discharged from the hospital and placed in foster care with Jane and Frank North on that date.

Susie was evaluated by the Division nurse on November 18, 2002. The nurse recommended that the infant be placed with foster parents who know how to manage drug exposed babies, but she did not recommend that Susie be classified Medically Fragile. The Division nurse evaluated the baby again on March 3, 2003. She recommended that Susie be classified Medically Fragile. The recommendation was declined by June, 2003.

Susie was monitored by the Child Health Nurse Drug Exposed Infant Program. At 2-months, she still exhibited tremors, shaking, hypertonicity and irritability, suggestive of latent drug withdrawal effects. She started occupational and physical therapy through the Visiting Nurse Association in January, 2003. She was experiencing significant nasal discharge, with snoring respiration due to congestion. She had an ENT assessment with

an endoscopy at 4-months of age which showed normal anatomy, but a hyperactive gag. By one-year of age, Susie was having some difficulty eating solid foods. She was choking and gagging. She still had constant nasal congestion. She continued to be followed by an ENT specialist. Her muscle tone was still rigid. She was walking independently, but would drag her right leg as the day progressed. She placed most of her weight on that side. She was getting physical therapy three times a week and occupational therapy twice a week at that point.

Susie had a neurological evaluation at Hackensack University Medical Center on June 25, 2003. No focal neurological deficits were detected. She had a Pediatric Neurodevelopmental Evaluation on September 17, 2003, at Morristown Memorial Hospital. There were concerns about seizures, but the earlier neurological assessment did not find significant abnormalities. At the time of her 9-month evaluation, all of Susie's developmental skills were measured at or above age level. She had another neurological evaluation on January 26, 2004, which proved unremarkable.

Susie was discharged from the Drug Exposed Infant Program in September, 2004. She continues to get physical, occupational, and speech therapy. She is followed by an orthopedic specialist and a neurologist.

Susie's developmental milestones are recorded as sitting at 6 months; crawling at 6 months; walking at 8 months; and saying her first words at about 4 months. She is a healthy toddler who is developmentally on target.

III. Request/Plan for Adoption

This family first came to the attention of the Division of Youth and Family Services in May, 1989, after the agency was notified that the birth mother, Donna, delivered her third child, and the baby tested positive for illicit drugs. Donna admitted to being drug involved. She was homeless. The baby's birth father, Jason, was incarcerated. Donna said that she and the baby could live with the baby's paternal grandmother, Rose. The grandmother said that she could not provide for another child as she already had custody of Donna's two oldest boys. The newborn, Michael, was placed with Donna's maternal uncle, Elliott, on June 8, 1989. Donna was referred to a rehabilitation program and for family counseling. She was non-compliant.

In July, 1990, a referral was received alleging that Donna was not properly caring for her fourth baby, Sarah. The allegation could not be substantiated. Supervision was established based on child welfare concerns.

In March, 1992, Donna was evicted after failing to pay rent for seven months. She was on Public Assistance. She had two children in her custody, Sarah and Michael. They started to move about, living with one relative, then another.

In April, 1992, the court terminated the Parental Rights of Donna and Jason to the child Michael. They had totally ignored the directives of the court. They failed to enter and complete rehabilitation programs. They failed to find jobs and secure housing. They failed to exercise visits with Michael.

In September, 1993, Donna was arrested on an outstanding 1990 warrant. She was living in a shelter with her two girls. They were briefly placed with a maternal aunt. Following her release from jail, Donna exhausted her stay at the shelter. DYFS put her up in a hotel in March, 1994. Red Cross located affordable housing for her in May, 1994.

In July of that year, the Division received a referral alleging that Donna left Christopher, Sarah and Rhonda, unsupervised to go get drugs. It appeared that she did arrange for neighbors to watch them while she went to the methadone clinic. Christopher was seen cooking plain spaghetti for the children to eat. There was no other food in the home. Neglect was substantiated and the case was opened for supervision. It was closed in April, 1998.

In July, 1999, the Division received a referral alleging that Donna gave birth to the child Brielle while she was on methadone. She was attending the Spectrum Clinic. This did not constitute neglect or abuse, but the case was opened for child welfare concerns.

By December, 1999, Donna was homeless again. The caseworker contacted Welfare officials to help. They said that Donna used up her housing assistance money for the year. The worker called Red Cross to arrange for temporary shelter. That agency would not help because they had assisted Donna so often in the past. DYFS contributed the necessary funds for Donna to secure an apartment.

Donna was incarcerated for drug-related offenses in the summer of 2000, and Sarah, Rhonda and Brielle went to live with their paternal grandmother, Rose. On November 2, 2000, the court granted the paternal grandmother legal and physical custody of the three girls because of Donna's continued drug involvement and lack of stability.

On November 3, 2002, the Division was advised by staff at Jersey City Medical Center that Donna gave birth to Susie and the baby tested positive for drugs. The birth father, Jason, was incarcerated. The birth mother was homeless. On December 1, 2002, the Division was granted custody, care and supervision of the newborn. No relatives were able to provide for her and she was placed in foster care.

Donna entered Sunrise House inpatient rehabilitative program on January 9, 2003. She was picked up there on an outstanding warrant on January 17, 2003. She did not notify the worker when she was released from jail in July, 2003.

Jason never complied with any of the court's directives. He never participated in a psychological evaluation or a substance abuse evaluation. He failed to maintain contact with the caseworker.

Neither Donna nor Jason attended scheduled visits with Susie. They failed to apprise the caseworker of their whereabouts; contact was maintained through family members. They failed to appear for court hearings in the case. Their parental rights to Susie were terminated on October 29, 2004. Neither one of them was able to overcome their disease of addiction and stabilize their life so they could safely parent the children.

IV. Birth Family Information

Birth Mother

Donna was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on July 3, 1961. Nothing is known about her early years. Her birth certificate indicates that she was the 5th child born to a single mother. Donna is an African-American woman, who stands 5 feet and 8 inches tall, and is heavyset. She dropped out of the 11th grade. She has an insignificant work history. She stated that she started to use heroin intranasally at the age of 28. She attended Spectrum Health Care and was on methadone from 1990 to 1999. She relapsed after she left that program. Donna has seven children by Jason. They were together for over

twenty years. They never married. None of the children are in their custody. Donna has a criminal record which includes two felony convictions. She was sentenced to 218 days in jail on January 23, 2001, on a felony charge of Sale of Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) within 1000 feet of a school. She had a prior felony conviction for Possession of CDS in 1990. She was sentenced to 30 days in jail and 3 years Probation. Donna has asthma. Her mother died of colon cancer.

Birth Father

Jason was born on October 27, 1960. He is an African-American man who stands 6 feet and 1 inch tall, and weighs 240lbs. He said that he is a high school graduate. He has an inconsistent employment history. He has a criminal record related to drug offenses. He did not cooperate with the Division, so little is known about him.

Siblings

Susie has three full brothers and four full sisters.

Daniel was born on October 19, 1980. He is now an adult and lives on his own. Christopher was born on December 18, 1983. He is now an adult. They were both raised by their paternal grandmother, Rose.

Michael was born on April 26, 1989. He suffered Drug Withdrawal Syndrome. He was released from the hospital to the care of his maternal great-uncle, Elliott, and his wife, Josephine. Donna's and Jason's parental rights to Michael were terminated in April, 1992. His great-uncle adopted him in 1994.

Sarah was born on June 29, 1990. Rhonda was born on August 24, 1991. Brielle was born on July 7, 1999. They are in the physical and legal custody of their paternal grandmother.

V. Adoption Issues

Susie is 2-years-old. She has lived with Jane and Frank North since she was 1-month-old. This is the only family she has ever known. She was exposed to drugs in utero, and has suffered from related problems. Her foster parents have vigilantly monitored her health and her development and sought appropriate interventions as needed. Susie is a happy toddler who is thriving in their care. She is legally free now and Jane and Frank are eager to adopt her. The case goal is foster home adoption.