

# a CCYSB SUCCESS STORY

## Elsa and Aaron...



### *A Family Preservation Program Success Story*

**THE FAMILY:** Elsa (10 years old) and Aaron (9 years old) live with their parents in rural Carroll County. Elsa is charming, loving, and does well academically. Aaron has a good sense of humor, is bright, and imaginative. Dad is a professional working in Towson and Mom stays at home to care for her elderly father. The family was referred to CCYSB by a hospital in D.C. after Elsa's recent hospitalization for mood problems, anxiety, aggression, and safety concerns. Both children were school-avoidant and experienced severe tantrums when limits were set: Aaron destroyed things when angry, and Elsa had expressed suicidal thoughts. Through their behaviors, the children wielded a tremendous amount of power in the household. Mom was overwhelmed, anxious, and suffered from poor physical health. Dad was frequently called home from work to intervene with the children and get them to appointments or to school. As a recovering alcoholic, Dad struggled with depression which was exacerbated by the chaos within the family; he worried that he would relapse.

**CHOOSING GOALS:** The family chose goals that focused on increasing mutual respect, improving consistency with household rules and consequences, improving communication between everyone, and parents taking care of their own mental health needs with medication and individual therapy. Parenting skills were emphasized which would unite the parents and shift the balance of power back where it belonged. The Family Preservation case manager engaged the children in their individual anger and worry management using a workbook approach; and the parent's reinforced these skills between sessions. The case manager worked with the family to locate an occupational therapist, find before school care and social groups for the children, along with much-needed assistance in organizing the children's complex health information.

**CELEBRATING HARD WORK AND SUCCESS:** At the end of treatment, Elsa's mood and anxiety were more manageable, the family reported fewer tantrums and tearfulness; Aaron had begun to use a few anger management tools, and was less volatile and destructive. Both children were attending school regularly and doing well academically; both parents were consistent with expectations and rules, and setting weekly behavioral goals for Elsa and Aaron's behavior and mood management. The family was successfully using weekly family meetings to discuss their issues and concerns.

PLEASE NOTE: Names have been changed to ensure patient confidentiality.



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