

## **THINGS I WANT SOCIAL WORKERS TO KNOW**

**Hi. My name is Anique. I am sixteen years old and in tenth grade at school.**

**I was diagnosed with FAS for the first time when I was eleven years old. I was diagnosed again at Sunny Hill Hospital two years ago. I was also diagnosed at that time with Fetal Dilantin Syndrome. I also went to medical genetics because my birth mom has a degenerative brain disorder. I have two syndromes. Some of the things that are different about me are from the dilantin and some are from the alcohol. My birth mother has a disease and is in a wheelchair. She also has seizures and the medicine she takes was not good for an unborn baby. The alcohol was not good, too.**

**When I was little, I lived with my grandmother until I was about six or seven. Then I lived with my birth mother because she wanted me back.**

**When I was eleven, I went into foster care because my mother could not take care of me and things were not good – they were really bad because of her boyfriends. I was in three foster homes before I found a family I could stay in.**

**I have been in my family now for two years and 4 months. (It is May 2004)**

**I had a lot of problems in the first three foster homes. They did not understand about FAS and how it affects me. They got mad at me all the time and I was always in trouble.**

**The way my life is now is much better than before, because I found a family that understands my disabilities. I feel happy and proud that I can have a caring family that can always be there for me when I need them. Now I can live a better life.**

## **HOW FAS AND FDS HAS AFFECTED ME**

I have a different face. My nose is wide because of both syndromes. My ears are very small. I am VERY sensitive to noises (like – balloons). I am slowly starting to improve. I need glasses because I am near sighted. I can't see hardly anything without them. I have major orthodontic problems. I have braces and I had to have ten teeth pulled out. I have all sorts of missing or extra teeth in my gums. Some of my teeth are fused together. I cannot move my mouth very far to smile, but I love to laugh.

My fingers look very different and my fingernails are very small. My toes are really different too. My head is smaller than normal because my brain is smaller. I am not short but my birth family are all very tall people. I used to be very thin, but I am not so much any more.

My IQ is about 80 and I have lots of learning problems.

I have a sensory integration disorder – things feel different to me – clothes, food, touch. I am very picky about all of those things. I really need people to understand this about me.

I have had a bladder problem all my life. I am finally starting to get better with it. I have been teased a lot because I would wet myself every single day until I got to this family. Now it is mostly just at night and hardly even then.

## **THINGS THAT ARE HARD FOR ME TO DO**

Making friends is very hard for me. I try very hard, but kids at school ignore me and walk away.

**I have a terrible memory!!!! I forget everything!!!! I lose things all the time and do not have any idea what happened to them. I forget what I am asked to do. I forget what I am doing in the middle of things. I need a lot of help to keep organized. If I don't have help, everything turns into a big mess.**

**I get distracted and paranoid very easily. I get confused all the time and have a lot of problems knowing what is going on. I have a lot of trouble understanding what people mean when they talk to me. It gets very confusing and I say the wrong thing by mistake.**

**I can tell time fine, but I have trouble figuring out how long things take, or knowing how long I have been doing something. I need a lot of help.**

**People used to say I lied all the time. In my last foster home, they did not trust me after one week and would give me money fines every time they said I was lying. I lived there for a year. My mom now says I don't lie, I just forget so much I don't remember what happened. My mom tells me what happened and then we forget about it.**

**School is hard for me when I do not understand things. I don't take hard subjects like socials and science because I can't understand them. I get special math which I am good at.**

### **THINGS I AM GOOD AT**

**I love band and I play the clarinet. I have even been on an overnight band trip. I have learned how to swim in my family.**

I used to be so scared of water but now I have even learned how to dive from the diving board! I learned in 2 months!! People said I would never learn, but I did.

I am good at counting things and helping. I love to help with chores and I love animals! I am crazy about horses and my mom now has started me collecting them.

I am a fantastic speller!!!! I am also very good at proof reading things for my mom – she is a terrible typist!! I had to tell her how to spell lots of the words in here. I talked and she typed.

### **THINGS I WANT TO SAY TO SOCIAL WORKERS**

Don't get discouraged or confused about FAS or think it is hopeless. Learn about FASD because you will have to be a social worker for lots of people who have it – it is VERY COMMON!!

You need to learn about how FAS has affected ME. We are all different, you know. I really need people to understand what sensory integration problems means in ME. It is a really big problem for me, and one I need people to understand.

Don't get mad at kids or teenagers or adults with FAS. Don't just get us out of your office as fast as you can.

You need to give us an appointment with lots of time because it is so hard to figure out what you are talking about to us. We are trying our hardest.

You need to talk to our parents or whoever we live with even though we are teens or adults so they can help us to

remember. If you do not, then don't blame us if we forget things, or do not understand or lose things or do things wrong.

Don't let people punish us for mistakes or freaking out because we don't do it on purpose. We do not forget or lie or show up late at an appointment on purpose, either. You need to make sure we have a good home where people understand us and accept us. You really need to make sure that you tell our parents or foster parents everything you tell us. This is about safety.

Take the time to get to know us. We are human beings too.

**IF I HAD THREE WISHES (BESIDES HAVING MY FAMILY)**

I would want a social worker who understands me and how FAS affects me.

To have a group for kids with FAS where we could get together and talk about having FAS

To have a special college or university for kids with FAS where we could get help to learn jobs and learn how to live life on our own or with only a little help