

## Andrew's Story

Andrew is a 5-year-old boy who has recently moved to the state with his mother, Sarah, and twin sister, Julia. Sarah is recently divorced and has full custody of the children. Sarah's mother invited the family to stay with her until they can get settled. Sarah is appreciative of the support, although she is concerned that her mother may find Andrew's periodic outbursts challenging in her small home. Sarah is hoping to find affordable housing, as well as a new job. She has worked as a nursing assistant in skilled nursing care facilities in the past but doesn't know if she has the certification necessary for similar jobs in Wisconsin. Sarah's mother works days at a local store and has offered to help with the children when she can.

Andrew and Julia were born at 37 weeks gestation and did well as newborns. Sarah felt that when he was a baby, Andrew appeared to be developing like his sister, but when he was a toddler she noticed differences, particularly in his interactions with toys and others. He didn't seem to be interested in using toys for their intended purpose. For example, he might flip toy blocks over and over, rather than stack them. Andrew also easily became upset when he didn't get what he wanted. She thought it was unusual that he didn't follow her gestures when pointing to something of interest. At this time, he continues to have difficulty with expressing his wants, especially if something is out of sight. This could be very frustrating for the entire family, since it was so difficult to know what he wanted, and he got so upset when he didn't get what he wanted.

Andrew was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and received early intervention services starting at age 2. Before moving he was enrolled in kindergarten and also received programming from speech and language, occupational, and physical therapy. Sarah has contacted the local school district and is waiting for an evaluation by the staff to determine Andrew's school program. She is anxious for Andrew to begin school and has heard the district has good services for children with special needs. His sister is doing well in her kindergarten class. Andrew can correctly point to pictures of objects and to colors that are named. He plays beside other children but doesn't use make-believe with other children or demonstrate counting skills. He prefers pushing trucks or cars and vocalizing, or spinning their wheels in front of his eyes. He follows some directions in routines, e.g., "Time for breakfast." He will sit at the table and eat his favorite food, chocolate chip waffles, with his fingers. He has a few clear words: "Mom," "Ju-ju" (Julia), "more," "no." He reliably nods his head "yes" in response to yes-or-no questions. At school he frequently becomes upset when the teacher doesn't understand what he wanted, or when the toy he wanted had been selected by another student. Past school records indicate scores on the *Preschool Language Scale-5<sup>th</sup> Edition* of 61 on the Auditory Comprehension portion and 51 in Expressive Communication. The records also contain a score from the *Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. His Mental Development Index was 68.

Sarah feels she can anticipate Andrew's needs most of the time and finds sticking to a routine makes it easier for Andrew at home. Andrew is able to remove his clothes independently but needs help with dressing. He doesn't like to have his hair cut or combed and can't tolerate using toothpaste, but he enjoys the electric toothbrush. Andrew uses the toilet when he is placed on it but does not go by himself. He enjoys bath time, but his mother has to help with washing. He washes his hands with supervision. He likes jumping on the bed and going to the park. His mother watches him closely at the park. She feels he lacks both the balance skills and judgment needed to successfully climb on play structures. At home, his preferred toys are cars, trucks,

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and plastic zoo animals. He frequently chews on the plastic zoo animals. Andrew will share a snack with his sister but tends to ignore her when she is upset or hurt. At his former school a customized communication board was being introduced in the classroom. His teachers reported positive results and were beginning to collect data to see if tantrums would decrease when the board was used. His special education teacher reported that he insisted on holding the board close to his face.

*Summary*

*Andrew's mother is anxious to enroll him in a school program so he can continue to learn new skills including developing a way for him to communicate with others at school. She is eager to find housing for her family, obtain a new job, and find skilled childcare if needed in order for her to work. She is worried that Andrew may lose skills because of the move to a new city and school. She appreciates her mother's support but is concerned that the new living situation may be difficult for everyone*

*Andrew has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and is exhibiting delays in learning, communication, motor skills, and daily living skills. He has developed limited social interaction skills with other children and at times has tantrums. The family is currently experiencing a major transition with the divorce and move to a new state. His mother is concerned that Andrew's behavior may be challenging with all the changes in his routine.*

*Follow-Up Suggestions and Recommendations:*

- 1. Referral for evaluation of augmentative communication tools.*
- 2. Referral to respite program.*
- 3. Provide resources for housing options.*
- 4. Referral to a pediatric ophthalmologist for a vision assessment.*
- 5. Provide information regarding programing options beyond school programming to address behavior challenges.*
- 6. Provide information regarding pediatric care options for children with special needs.*