

### Leev's Story

Leev is an 8-year-old boy from a Hmong family. His mother is Kha Hli. He has a younger sister, Me, who is 5 years old. Leev has always been "a boy with quick temper," lashing out, breaking things, and showing aggression toward property and others, especially his sister. Leev and his father, Kum, spent lots of time in the outdoors. Leev seemed to be less impulsive and aggressive while with his father. Leev's father, Kum, was killed in a deer hunting accident when Leev was 7 years old. Leev witnessed his father's accident but is very reluctant to speak about it to anyone.

Kha Hli is bilingual in English and her native Hmong language. She speaks primarily English in the home with her two children. Kha Hli and her husband spoke Hmong with each other and found it important to keep the Hmong traditions in their family. Leev's grandparents were refugees from Thailand. Kha Hli and Kum were both born in the U.S. Kha Hli's elderly in-laws live nearby, and she spends time caring for them. The children come with her and are exposed to the Hmong language while in their home. Kha Hli is employed as a bookkeeper/purchaser in a small manufacturing company. Kum's older brother, Soob, (the children's uncle) is involved in caring for the family since Kum's death.

Leev attends second grade at a public school in their community, a town in central Wisconsin. He has a history of learning problems and behavioral challenges. He has an individualized education program (IEP) and has received special education services since kindergarten. Cognitive testing was done two years ago. Leev was administered the *Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children-III (WISC-III)*. Results revealed a Verbal IQ of 61 and a Performance IQ of 68. For kindergarten and first grade, Leev was fully integrated into his classroom with the support of a special educator to modify his curriculum. This year the staff noticed that Leev was more receptive to instruction when he was in a very small group or in a one-on-one situation. The decision was made by school staff to have Leev in a cross-categorical classroom for reading, language arts, and math. He joins his regular education classroom for science, social studies, and other special classes with the support of a special education assistant. Leev is prone to outbursts when instruction and work expectations are challenging.

Leev's mother, Kha Hli, has reported that Leev was baby who was very difficult to settle for the first year. She described him as a late talker. His behavior was challenging, but manageable until his sister was born, and then it seemed that he became very aggressive. Kha Hli continually worries that Leev will hurt his sister. He becomes aggressive very quickly and without provocation. She feels she constantly has to monitor where Leev is and what he is doing in order to know that Me is safe.

*Summary*

*Kha Hli has noticed that Leev has two moods, either withdrawn or aggressive, since Kum's death. She is worried that he is removed so much from his regular classroom this year, and wonders what this means for Leev long term. Soob, her brother-in-law, is helpful but is not able to get Leev out into the woods as much as his father did. At the same time, Kha Hli wonders if getting out is a good thing or not, since Leev does not seem ready to talk about the event. Me's safety is a huge worry for Kha Hli.*

*Leev has a history of mild intellectual disability based on the results of a standardized test. He also has a history of behavioral challenges that have escalated in the context of significant trauma. Leev's behavior is affecting the day-to-day function of the family and has an impact on the safety of others, especially his younger sister.*

*Follow-Up Suggestions and Recommendations:*

- 1. Consider having Leev see a trauma therapist who is intimate with the Hmong culture. In the absence of a professional with this background, it will be important to have a cultural broker or expert in the Hmong culture consult with the therapist.*
- 2. Consider retesting Leev's cognitive skills and learning within the next year. A non-verbal cognitive assessment may provide more information about Leev's learning style to help the school staff structure a learning environment that optimally supports Leev.*
- 3. Kha Hli and Me (and perhaps extended family) would likely benefit from trauma or grief counseling in their community. This would be in addition to their cultural traditions and supports.*
- 4. Me could also benefit from a sibling support program.*
- 5. The family may benefit from a culturally sensitive assessment of their needs to be sure that they are aware of all community, state, and federal services, and can access the services that they choose.*