

Unit 1: The History and Trends of the Juvenile Justice System

Throughout the weekly Discussion Board, we will examine the life of Sarah Johnson. Each week, you will be given new developments in her life and asked to consider various situations as you complete your assignments. As you read each of these stories, pay special attention to the various circumstances in Sarah's life that have an impact on her emotional responses and her subsequent behaviors.

Meet Sarah

Sarah Johnson is born into a loving family. While her parents struggle to make ends meet, they provide Sarah with a stable home life and a loving environment. Unfortunately, circumstances change and have a long-term impact on Sarah's development.



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Age 5

Sarah loses both of her parents in a boating accident. Sarah is taken into foster care while relatives can be located.

Sarah is shortly thereafter sent to live with her maternal aunt, Emily, and her husband, Fergus. Emily and Fergus have two children of their own, both of whom are in their early teens.

Emily and Fergus welcome Sarah into their home but struggle to spend a lot of time with her as both work full-time and have a full schedule of children's clubs and activities.



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Age 8

In September, Emily receives a call from Sarah's principal. Sarah has attacked one of the other students and ignored her teacher when reprimanded. The principal reports that this is not the first altercation that Sarah has been involved in but is the first that became physical.



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Age 9

Sarah struggles to make friends or deal with her grief over losing her parents. One day, Sarah goes to the store a block away with a couple of other girls from her neighborhood. Emily receives a call from the store reporting that Sarah has been caught stealing candy with friends. Emily meets with the store manager and he is willing to let Sarah go, provided she doesn't come back to the store without an adult.

Upon returning home, Emily lectures Sarah about her behavior and how she should not be hanging out with these "friends." Sarah cries in response and Emily sends her to her room "to think about what she has done."

