

Maria (40) immigrated to the United States with her first husband, Raul, shortly after they were married, 20 years ago. Raul, being fully bilingual, handled all the business affairs for the family. After moving to the US, they had a child, Sofia, who is now 12 years old. When Sofia was three, Raul was killed in a car accident. Maria and Sofia were in the vehicle and sustained minor injuries from the accident. Maria reported that Sofia had a hard time adjusting after the accident and to the loss of her father, as they were very close. Maria relied on friends in the community to help her access resources, as she does not speak English well.

A couple of years after Raul's death, Maria met Luis and became pregnant with her second child, Marco, who is now six years old.

Luis has worked for the same company since he and Maria met. Maria worked after Raul died but stopped working shortly after she met Luis. The family moved from the city they lived in to a rural area a couple of years ago because Luis took a promotion. The kids have adjusted to the move, but it was difficult for Sofia to leave her friends. The move has also been difficult for Maria, as she is Spanish speaking and as their new town does not have a significant Hispanic population, she has to rely on Luis or the children to translate for her.

The child welfare agency received a report from Sofia's teacher. The teacher reported that Sofia's behavior had changed in the last couple months. Sofia was typically bubbly, outgoing, and energetic but recently appeared withdrawn, was not interacting with friends, and appeared very tired, and at times very anxious. When the teacher asked Sofia about how she was doing, she disclosed that her stepfather, Luis, had been coming into her room at night and touching her.

The child welfare agency talked with Sofia and Marco, who both reported being afraid of Luis, especially when he drinks. Sofia confirmed that Luis had touched her at night, and it had happened a few times. Sofia reported that Luis often yells at Maria for moving too slowly to do things he tells her to do. Sofia saw Luis slap her mom and push her. She has also witnessed Luis breaking things in the house, taking Maria's wallet, and when Maria's family calls, Luis tells them that Maria is not home (even though she is.) Sofia also said that even though Maria blames his drinking, this is typical behavior by Luis even when he is sober.

The child welfare agency has only one Spanish speaking investigator. The investigator attempted to contact Maria several times but was not successful on the first few attempts. When they were finally able to contact her, Maria reported that things are fine in the home. Maria mentioned that Luis calls her names and puts her down in front of the children sometimes but denied any physical abuse. Maria admitted that Luis drinks every night after work. Maria says that it is true that Luis decides who Maria can see and where she can go, rarely letting her leave the house. Luis does not want Maria to work and only gives her money for groceries or other bills. Sometimes, Luis will refuse to give Maria money if she does something wrong. Maria has taken Sofia to translate for her at the local church and food banks to get assistance, as no one there speaks Spanish and forms are in English only. She has also

sought rental assistance but was told that Luis' income is too high to qualify for help, even though they are two months behind on rent.

Maria reported that a neighbor called the police four months ago because they could hear Luis yelling and throwing things around the house. Maria reported that Luis was drunk that night and when he was arrested, she felt pressured to file a Protection from Abuse (PFA) order. When Luis got out of jail, he told Maria that he would divorce her and take everything, including the children, if she didn't drop the PFA. Maria had no money for an attorney and believed that Luis would stop drinking since he was arrested. Maria was also worried that if she drew too much attention to herself, child welfare might get involved. She dropped the PFA.

About a month later, Luis slapped Maria when he found that his work uniforms weren't dried fast enough after Maria washed them. Maria said that Luis was stressed from work and had started drinking again. Maria also noted that, because English is not her first language, she often feels alone and unsure of how to safely seek help. She has not reached out for any domestic violence services as it is difficult to communicate with their staff. Maria does not want to separate from Luis as she cannot financially support herself and has no family nearby.

Maria reports that Sofia has never told her anything about Luis touching her, but she knows that Sofia does not like Luis. The investigator noted that Maria seemed overwhelmed and stressed.

Police interviewed Luis. Luis reports that Sofia is a liar and has never liked him because he's not her real dad. Luis said that Maria babies the kids and they are not disciplined. Luis admitted that he drinks after work because he works hard. The allegations remain under investigation; and Luis remains in the home.

Sofia and Marco have been removed from the home and placed in foster care, as it is believed an emergency exists. There are no relatives or non-related kin who have been identified as a placement resource.

At the initial case plan meeting, Maria and Luis arrive together. The case plan is developed and includes tasks for each parent to complete. Luis translated for Maria at the case plan meeting, as there were no Spanish-speaking staff available. At times, it appeared that Maria was asking a question, but Luis did not translate what Maria said back to the case worker.

Sofia told her case worker that she wishes she never said anything, and she feels like their removal is all her fault. Sofia expressed concern to the investigator that her mom might get in trouble and was worried about not being home to make sure her mom was safe. Sofia asked the investigator a lot of questions about what will happen and if she and Marco can stay together. Sofia is also worried that Marco might go back to his dad (Luis) and be separated from her.