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11/01/19

**DIAGNOSTIC PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION**

**Patient Name:** Alexandra (Ally) Kassenoff

**Date of Birth:** 07/15/2009

**Dates of Evaluation:**

07/29/19	Meeting with father (Allan)
07/30/19	Meeting with mother (Catherine)
08/20/19	Meeting with Alexandra
09/04/19	Meeting with Alexandra
10/03/19	Phone call with Sara Weiss
10/14/19	Meeting with Alexandra

In addition to my interviews, I reviewed numerous documents related to the current divorce litigation, and each parent provided me with video and audio recordings of the other parent.

*(It is important to note that although child custody is currently being litigated, I was only engaged to diagnose and make treatment suggestions for Alexandra. I have no opinions regarding custody. It should also be noted that when I conduct forensic custody evaluations, I give each parent an opportunity to respond to the other's allegations. Since this was a strictly clinical assessment, I did not do that; I do not have an opinion regarding the relative credibility of the Allan's and Catherine's statements.)*

**Identifying Information:**

Ally is a 10-year-old adopted white female whose parents are currently separated and divorcing. She has two younger sisters, neither of whom is adopted.

### **Chief Complaint:**

For the last several years, Ally has had a number of behavioral problems, primarily lying and stealing. Allan reported that Alexandra has lied for several years. She has also stolen from other children both at school and at camp. Catherine said she is worried that Alexandra "will be in a bad place in a few years. She doesn't learn from her mistakes. Lying feels like it's part of her nature. She says she does it to escape blame, to blame others, or to get her way."

Allan reported that Catherine was never very interested in Ally, and that Catherine has always treated Ally differently than her two sisters. He asserted that Alexandra has always been closer to him. When she was only three or four, Catherine allegedly told Alexandra that she was adopted and not part of her "real family. Catherine also turned Charley and JoJo against Alexandra."

Catherine asserted that she and Allan are not on the same page regarding discipline, that he has a tendency to minimize Alexandra's problems. Because he does not want to engage in difficult conversations, Catherine has had to be the primary disciplinarian, and Allan has undermined her. Catherine reported, "We're four years into this. Ally lies so much. She gets people into trouble, teachers and administrators in addition to Allan and me." For example, Ally recently reported that one student called another student the N-word. Everyone in the room said it did not happen. One or two students even stated that Ally was the one who used this term.

Catherine said that she worries about Alexandra's self-confidence and self-esteem. Allie has experienced a great deal of difficulty in school. She tends to be disorganized and forgetful. She cannot get through a book. She is increasingly withdrawn. When she talks, it is often in a little mouse voice. Socially, she argues with peers and her sisters. The kids know that she lies. They tease her. They call her a liar. She has better relationships with adults than children. She carefully watches the way that adults interact with each other.

### **History of Present Illness:**

Ally had no problems in preschool. Her parents said they first became concerned when she was in kindergarten and told a lie about skating equipment. Neither parent thought much of this, but it was odd because the lie was so detailed.

In first grade (20165– 2016) Ally's behavioral problems became more obvious. She began stealing toys, jewelry and food from other students and then lied about it to her parents and teacher. The school expressed concern about this behavior. She also had trouble making friends and developed a negative reputation because of her behavior. Nevertheless, her grades were reasonably good. In March 2016 Ally was seen by Dr. Ronald Jacobson, a behavioral

neurologist. He opined that Ally may have a conduct disorder. He also noted inattentiveness, poor sense of time, reactive behaviors, poor handwriting, and socialization difficulties. Then, in May 2016, Ally saw Dr. Martin Kutscher, another behavioral neurologist who diagnosed Ally with ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder, as well as a pragmatic language disorder. (At this time, Allan completed a structured ADHD questionnaire, and his answers supported the ADHD diagnosis.) Over the next several months he prescribed Adderall, which helped with attention but had no impact on Ally's antisocial behavior. By early 2017, Dr. Kutscher also noted asocial personality traits with little empathy or remorse.

Ally continued to lie and steal. At the end of the summer 2017, she was expelled from the local day camp after breaking into other kids' backpacks and stealing money. She used the money to buy ice cream. One day she stole \$60.00. The counselors confronted her. She lied and said that Catherine had given her the money. Then she said it was her sister's money. The family had to meet with the camp director. Alexandra was told that if she admitted what she had done, they would suspend her rather than expel her, but she continued to lie. Her reaction, per Catherine, was "nonchalant. Even when the girl's mother came in. There was no emotion. I'm concerned about her total lack of remorse."

In late 2017, in an effort to address Ally's use of sweets, the family decided to put up a camera in the kitchen. Alexandra unplugged it. She became upset when her parents plugged it back in, and she reported to the school that Catherine had kicked her and pulled her hair. Ally also reported that her father would not feed her, and that he yelled and screamed at her. (During this evaluation, she explained that she wanted to get her parents into trouble because she was angry at them.) ACS got involved. The family hired an attorney. The allegations were unfounded.

Alexandra continued to make complaints to school staff that she was not properly fed. The school was under the impression that Catherine did not provide Ally with snacks. It turned out that she simply did not like her snacks, threw them in the garbage, and then complained of not being fed. CPS investigated the family during 2017 and 2018. In the fall of 2018, at an afterschool activity, the staff found ice pops in the teacher's freezer. Eventually Ally admitted they were hers. She did not want the staff to call her parents.

The parents have had chronic disagreements regarding how to address Ally's problems. Catherine said Allan would rather be Ally's friend than a parent. "He's afraid of her. Rather than having a tough conversation, he avoids them. He's not interested in teaching life lessons. He said I should do things my way. He'll do things his. He wouldn't let me listen to him intervene with her. He would say that I was hard on Ally, but he just wasn't around. He'd say that since punishments are ineffective, why punish her at all. We tried positive reinforcement. We tried taking things away, giving timeouts, and assigning chores. Allan would ask why I

wasn't this way with the other two." Allan said, "Catherine believes all of this was caused by genetics. She sent Ally to Dr. Kutscher, a behavioral neurologist, who spent most of the time talking to Catherine and then diagnosed Alexandra with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and ADHD." Ally inconsistently took stimulant medication for her ADHD, but it had no impact on her antisocial behavior. Allan said he thinks that Alexandra acts out because of Catherine's treatment of her. He described in great detail how Catherine never seemed interested or involved in Ally's care, and how Catherine treated Ally differently than Charley and Jojo.

Earlier this year, the family noticed thousands of dollars of charges on Amazon for jewelry, shoes, phones, and a calculator. Alexandra apparently used Allan's Kindle to make the orders, including \$2000 worth of merchandise and another \$2000 worth of films. Ally had been doing this for a month. She would intercept the packages and then take them to school and give them away.

In February or March 2019, Allan wanted Alexandra to go to psychotherapy. He said Catherine initially resisted this but finally agreed to see someone. Allan arranged a session, but Catherine ended up canceling the appointment. Catherine said she was reluctant to enroll Ally in 1:1 psychotherapy for fear she would lie to the therapist.

In April 2019 Alexandra told her teacher that she had an afterschool program. This was untrue. Around the same time, Catherine drove to school to pick up Charlotte. She coincidentally saw Alexandra rushing into the CVS parking lot. "She looked me in the eye. I called her. She didn't answer. She was supposed to be at dodgeball club. The assistant principal checked. Ally said she'd been there during the whole class. Then the teacher said that Ally just walked in. She continues to lie. Finally, she admitted it. We had a meeting. Ally was defiant and angry. She told the school staff that she thought they would just think 'my mom's crazy.' Allan and I both have this fear of her ability to manipulate people."

On 05/11/19 Allan and Catherine were gardening. Ally was also there. Catherine and Allan had some type of disagreement. He said she threw a weed at him, and he threw it back at her. She then said that he blinded her. She went to urgent care and took Alexandra with her. That night Ally was allowed to sleep in the same room as Catherine and the two other children, after having been forced to sleep separately from them for the last several years. A couple of days later Ally told school staff that Allan had kicked her. Jojo apparently corroborated Ally's report. Shortly thereafter, CPS initiated an investigation. Allan said, "The school knew it was a lie. I came home that Thursday night [after sleeping out of the home for a couple days because of an out of town deposition]. Everyone was locked in Catherine's room. ... That morning I asked Alexandra about telling lies. Catherine said, 'Don't you dare talk to my child like that.' I said they were all liars. I left and met with my divorce attorney. When I got home there was no one there."

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When questioned about risk-taking, Catherine reported that several years ago Alexandra was home with the nanny. She was in her room with her younger sisters. She thought it would be cool to open the window and slide down the roof. She put both of her younger sisters on the roof. She then denied it. She adamantly asserted that she would never put her sisters in danger. She finally admitted what she had done.

More recently Alexandra has begun to use her father's razor to shave her legs. She drinks alcohol. Catherine noticed that a bottle of Kahlúa, high on a shelf, was gone one day. Allan said he did not drink it. When Catherine asked Alexandra, she lied. Then she admitted that she poured herself sips of Kahlúa.

**Current Treatment and Medications:**

Ally is not currently in treatment. She has taken medication in the past but not currently.

**History of Previous Psychiatric Illness and Treatment:**

Regarding past treatment, in 2016 Alexandra saw a pediatric neurologist, Dr. Ronald Jacobson. He wanted to check her for temporal lobe epilepsy. Allan, per Catherine, refused. (There is no evidence Ally has symptoms of TLE.) Then Catherine took Alexandra to Dr. Martin Kutscher, a pediatric neurologist. He continues to see her. He diagnosed her with ADHD, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder, asocial type. He noted there was also an issue with pragmatic language. He prescribed Adderall. Catherine said, "It was effective until she stopped taking it. She would cheat it. Allan did not administer it regularly." Ally then developed a "heart flutter." Catherine decided that if she could not take the medication daily, she should not take it at all. Catherine also said that the teachers knew when Alexandra took the medication and when she didn't. Her third-grade teacher noted this. Her grades went down in the fourth grade. She had major problems with distraction. She would raise her hand to go to the bathroom, just to take a break.

## **Developmental History:**

Ally's parents wanted children. They tried IVF and surrogacy, but neither was effective. They then looked into adoption and found a family that they thought would be a good fit. They flew to Tampa, Florida, met with an attorney and the birth parents, who seemed "nice but overwhelmed. Both were out of work. Dad was a Christian," per Allan. Catherine reported that the biological parents had other kids and not enough money to raise them. The biological mother was obese. She had diabetes. She allegedly drank and smoked daily. Some drug usage was suspected. Catherine said she also had a criminal history of embezzlement, fraud, forgery, and bad checks, but these arrests occurred after the adoption. There was little information available on the biological father other than that he was Eastern European and had a spotty work history.

Alexandra was born on 07/15/09. She was delivered by C-section. The pregnancy, labor, and delivery were medically unremarkable. When Allan and Catherine came to pick her up, she had a high fever and needed to stay in the hospital overnight. Allan said, "Catherine wanted me to sleep there. It seemed odd that she didn't want to be there." The couple stayed in Florida for three weeks and then returned to New York. From the beginning, per Allan, Catherine had difficulty bonding with Alexandra. The couple had a live-in nanny. Because Alexandra cried, Catherine allegedly told Allan to keep the child up all day, and that if she fell asleep, Allan was supposed to drip water on her head. He refused and stated that Catherine was upset about this and told him he had to get up at night with Ally.

Both parents described Ally as a happy, easy infant and toddler. She met her developmental milestones on time, although she was somewhat slow to develop speech. Catherine said she was not difficult, but she cried a lot. She had had a hard time with self-soothing. She liked to cuddle.

According to Allan, upon returning from Florida with Ally, Catherine wanted to start IVF immediately. She allegedly told him she was going to have another kid with or without him. Charlotte (Charley) was born on 02/01/11. Catherine was a doting mother to her. Josephine (Jojo) was born on 08/10/13.

Allan asserted that Catherine treated Alexandra very differently than the other two children. He said that she slept with them every night while Ally had to sleep in another room. "Sometimes Catherine makes Ally sleep in the basement if she misbehaves. She makes her eat in her room while Catherine eats with the other kids." He also alleged that Catherine had Alexandra make her bed and clean up after the family's three dogs. Allan further reported that au pairs have quit because of the way Catherine treats Alexandra. When the family moved to a new home, Ally slept on a mattress on the floor. Catherine helped the younger kids with their violin and homework every night. Ally had to rely on her father for

homework help. When the couple moved from New Rochelle to Larchmont, Catherine pulled Ally from Rye Country Day but kept Charley in the private French school she attended. Allan said that Catherine took Alexandra's birthday gifts and gave them to the other children.

Allan reported that Ally had always been closer to him than Catherine, but since the filing, Ally has taken her mother's side.

### **School History:**

Ally has always been in regular, as opposed to special, education.

### **Social History:**

Allan and Catherine are currently divorcing. They are both attorneys. Allan works in a law firm as a patent attorney. I am not sure of Catherine's current employment.

Allan filed for divorce on 05/24/19. He said that when he arrived home that evening, Catherine had all the kids in her room with a locked door. Three minutes later, Charley ran out of the room. She said she was scared of a bee. Catherine told Allan that he "had company." Two police officers showed up and served Allan with an Order of Protection. He had to get some things and leave the home. The family went back to court on 06/06/19. By this time the OP against Allan had been vacated. He obtained an ex-parte OP against Catherine that gave him full custody. She was ordered into psychotherapy, as was Ally.

Subsequently, the parties agreed to a 50/50 access schedule, but Catherine required supervision. Charley and JoJo were also ordered into therapy. The therapist diagnosed JoJo with PTSD "related to the acts of the father. JoJo complained of recurring nightmares and flashbacks of her father throwing her mother across the bed." Allan said that JoJo "wasn't even there" when the alleged incident occurred.

### **Medical History:**

Alexandra is generally healthy although she has some dental problems.

Because of her theft of sweets at home, Ally was screened for diabetes and an eating disorder. This focus on sweets persists, according to Catherine. Ally eats raw sugar and Ovaltine powder. In 2018 "Alexandra's eating problems became really bad. She gained 12 pounds in less than a year." (Ally does not appear to be overweight.)

### **Family History:**

See above for biological parental history.

Allan asserted that Catherine has symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder, that she has had trouble getting along with people and has been fired from many jobs, that she has not spoken to her family of origin in years, and that she has a tendency to overreact. "She chronically lies and may not even know it." Catherine asserted that Allan has had chronic problems with anger, and that he has been emotionally and verbally abusive.

My review of the various collateral materials suggests that both parents have lost their tempers with each other and with the children.

### **Interviews:**

On 08/20/19, when I first met with Ally, she said that she thought she was seeing me because it was hard for her to keep in all the feelings about what's going on in her family. She said she was 10 years old and going into the fifth grade.

Alexandra said that the problems started a year or two ago. "My dad has a stressful job. He's a patent attorney. He'd come home mad, very late at night. One morning, my mom asked him to make coffee because she was getting us ready and was going through chemo. He asked why she couldn't make coffee. He pushed her. He fell across the room. We were all crying. I hate it when my parents fight with each other. I don't remember what happened after that."

Subsequently, on a Saturday, Ally was gardening with her mother and father. "My dad wasn't getting the weeds by the root. When my mom said something, he shouted. He asked why she was criticizing him. Then she started pulling the weeds from the stem. He got mad and threw dirt at her. She had to go to urgent care. My dad and sisters didn't know where we were. JoJo had soccer. Charley said maybe we went to urgent care. They found us there. Charley stayed with us. Before they came, my mother told the doctor what happened. Then my dad went to soccer with JoJo, and then he went to the gym. He came home late that night. Two days later, he was getting me and Charley ready for school. Mom and JoJo slept in. The dogs were fighting. He said the dog bit him. He grabbed the dog by the collar and threw it into the crate. He was mad. He kicked me with his boots. I started crying. He said I was such a baby. My sister tried to help me. My dad said shut up. JoJo saw the kick. Mom was still asleep. That night I told my mom what happened. She said I should tell my principal and vice principal what happened. They called CPS. They came that night and the next. The second night I talked with them. They saw the bruise on my leg. That was in March or April. Dad wasn't allowed in the house for a week."



Alexandra also said, "We were hosting my sister's birthday sleepover one weekend. While everyone was arriving, my mom was served [with legal papers]. I saw divorce on the papers. She was crying. She said that dad had filed. I was sad because I thought that he would go to therapy and be nicer. He used to always say he wanted a divorce. He used to always say, 'I hate you Catherine. I hate your family.' It made me sad. It was rude. Charley still had her birthday party. Allan came to the house to get his stuff that night. Everyone was crying because he had to come to the house with the police. We opened the door. It looked like he was going to punch mom. The officer had to push him away, to stop him from hitting her. Charley's best friend, Anya, was crying. She said she wanted her dad."

Alexandra reported that Allan stayed with his parents and friends after leaving the marital home, and that subsequently, her parents moved in and out of the home. Ally said she was "still scared of dad. He gets angry at us if we don't do something right. He screams at us. I want more time with my mom than my dad. It made me sad because I didn't want my parents to separate, but I was mad because I thought that he would get better, and he didn't. It made it hard for me to concentrate in school." She said that she wants more than half the time with her mother. "I'm pretty sure JoJo feels the same. I'm not sure about Charley. She sticks up for people when she feels bad."

Alexandra reported that she had just gotten back from sleep away camp two days before this incident. She had been away for two weeks. She said it was fun. Her father dropped her off and picked her up.

Alexandra said she has her own attorney, Ms. Most, but she has only seen her once. Her sisters have seen her twice. Alexandra told her camp counselors that she was adopted. "It was a camp for kids who are adopted. The counselors are adopted. I'm adopted, but not my sisters."

Ally reported that her mother is a lawyer, as is her father. He is on the planning board. She is on the zoning board.

Alexandra said, "Neither parent treats me differently because I'm adopted. I used to think my mom did, because she took stuff out of my room, but I realized it was just because I'm messy."

Alexandra said she used to take medication for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, but she "kept forgetting to take it, so I stopped." She said she gets along with her sisters, although sometimes they fight. Her sleep is good. She wakes up early to feed her dogs. She has played viola since the third grade. She likes it. She also plays basketball, soccer, and tennis. She has "lots of friends." Her best friend is Charlotte. They have been close since the first grade. They have play dates, "but none since the divorce started. I'm going to try to follow

the path of my mom if I become a parent, but I'm not going to get cancer or breast cancer."

On 09/04/19, Alexandra said that she likes being with her mother more than her father because her mother "doesn't do bad stuff to us." Her father kicked her "a long time ago."

When asked to describe her parents, Alexandra first described her mother. "She's nice to us. She only yells at us if we do something bad, like if she has to call for us 10 times. Right now, mom's a little nervous from all this stuff because my dad wants us to live with him. Mom's mostly calm. She pays attention to us. If she works on the computer, she still pays attention to us. She's affectionate. For punishment she makes us sit on the basement steps to think about what we've done. Sometimes she sends us to our room or there is no TV. She rarely yells."

She described her father as getting angry easily. "He's not patient. He will yell at us a lot. Sometimes he's angry about something else but will yell at us. For example, once he was angry with my mom because she was talking to us and told my dad to go to another room. I don't know if he's calm or nervous. He only shows anger and calmness. He doesn't pay as much attention to us as mom. For punishment, he tells us to go to our room for an hour, or no TV for a month, but the next day he lets us watch TV."

Alexandra described her sister, Charley, as "nice, kind unless you pick a fight with her. She usually shares with you. She's kind. She helps with things. Once she touched my fish and said she was sorry. She's just really nice person. She goes to the French school in the third grade.

JoJo is in kindergarten at Chatsworth. "She's really nice unless you pick a fight with her. She helps me to clean stuff up. She helps take care of the dog with me. She loves the dogs. When I'm with my mom I feed the dogs at 6:30 in the morning, and I feed them when I get home."

Alexandra said she has a lot of friends, "but none of them can come over now." Her best friend since the first grade is Charlotte. "She's a nice friend, but sometimes she's bossy. She doesn't like it when people judge each other. She will help you if you're mad or sad. I've gone to her house, but not for the last year. Sometimes my parents forget where I am. Charlotte and I had one short fight. We started to write this novel about us. We fought over colored pencils."

Alexandra said she does not have a phone. Her father told her that he would get her one if she is good this year, "but I'm not always good. I fight with my sisters. I have another best friend, Caitlin. I've been to her house a couple of times. She hasn't been to mine because she's a little scared of dogs. I also am friends with

Paige. She just started third grade at Chatsworth. We played together at recess and lunch."

When asked to describe her own personality, Alexandra said she is "not that patient." She can get angry easily. "People can push my nerves a lot. Like JoJo. I'm nice to other kids. If I have something bad to say, I just keep it quiet. It's easy to annoy me. Sometimes I'm mean to my sisters if they're mean to me. I'm kind to people. I get in trouble for talking too much."

Alexandra said that she is normally calm and generally happy, but she is nervous about the divorce. She is neither popular nor unpopular, "but popular means wearing makeup and being mean." Alexandra has one enemy, Casey. "He gets in trouble a lot at school. He's been my enemy since the first grade. He popped some balloons and poured Gatorade on my pizza."

When asked about three wishes, Alexandra said she wants to be healthy, to stay with her mother, and to get a phone. When I asked Alexandra what was the worst thing she has ever done, she said that she put a fake bug in Georgia's bed. "I thought it was funny at first, but then I felt bad." Alexandra wants to be a baker or pastry chef when she grows up. She wants to open a bakery with her sisters.

I asked about some of the more negative behaviors that had been reported to me. Ally said that she "used to take things without saying anything. I'd lie. I'd keep saying no no no. I was nervous I would get caught. I worried about what would happen. Then I would leave. In the first grade this girl, Serafina, bullied me, so I took her bracelet. She told the teacher. She knew I'd taken things from my house. In the second grade, if I had a bad snack, I would throw it away and steal someone else's snack. Only three girls knew, but not Charlotte. I didn't tell her because she can't keep a secret. The teacher found out. I got into trouble at home. In the third grade, I would throw my snack away and tell my teacher I was hungry. She'd send me to the nurse. My teacher told my mom that she had to pack me a snack. My mom told her she was packing a snack. I got punished again. I got sent to the principal's for lying to the teacher. I eat a lot of bad stuff."

Ally said that she does not like to talk about this stuff because it makes her feel bad about herself. "I feel bad about lying. I used to lie a lot. I feel a little bad, but then I'd lie again. I want to see someone. I just want to see what's going on because it feels better to get it all out."

During my third meeting with Alexandra, on 10/14/19, I commented that it seemed as if she lies all the time. She responded, "Kind of. When people tell me lying is no good, I still lie to get out of trouble. But I just lie to my parents."

Ally told me she was in the fifth grade. She has "ADD." She takes Adderall. "It was my dad's responsibility to give it to me. He forgot most of the time, and I forgot to ask. My mom said I shouldn't take it if I wasn't getting it regularly, so I stopped taking it in the fourth grade, and then I got a bad score on standardized tests. Not taking the medicine has affected my attitude. It was better on medication. I want to go back on medication." Ally denied there were any side effects. She said the medication wore off around 3 PM.

On a typical day Alexandra goes to the school in the morning. She walks home, does her homework, goes to her sister's activities. They both play violin. Ally said, "My mom told me that I should do something different, so I chose the viola. I like it. I take lessons in school. My sisters only take lessons outside."

I asked Ally if she thought her mother treated her differently than her sisters. She said, "She treats me a little different from my sisters, but my sisters don't lie in school, so they don't get into trouble. Now I sleep in my mom's room, but my sisters sleep in the bed with her. When I'm with my dad, he doesn't let us in his room. We don't really want to sleep with him." Ally said that when she gets punished, she has to sleep in her own room. She denied ever sleeping in the basement. "Once mom told me to sleep in the basement, but then she said I could sleep in my own room." Alexandra elaborated that the basement is actually a playroom, so it would not have been like sleeping in a cold or dirty basement.

Alexandra attends school across from where she lives. She attended a private school in Rye for pre-k and kindergarten. JoJo attended the local public school beginning in kindergarten. Charley is in the French American school. When I asked Alexandra why she did not attend, she said, "It was too hard for me to speak French. Charlotte is an easy learner."

At the end of the session Alexandra said there were a couple of things she wanted to tell me; she referred to notes she'd written in a diary. First, "On a Friday my dad was screaming a lot that morning because Charley wasn't listening. My sisters were having a fight. I told dad to calm down. Then he started screaming at me because I was about to wake the whole neighborhood. He threatened to take away Charley's stuff. He threw her stuff in his closet. Charley called my mom. My mom said she couldn't do anything, that we had to call our attorney. Charley was hiding under the bed talking to my mom. When my dad went to the bathroom Charley got her stuff. I helped her. Dad said he was going to get the meanest nanny in the world to care for us. Then he threw her stuff at her."

Second, "We have someone who comes to the house to talk with us. Her name is Ms. Reed. We arranged to go with our mom for Halloween. When we told our dad he said he was staying with us. He yelled at us. We said prove it. He just slammed the door."

When questioned about the reports to CPS, Alexandra said, "The stuff about my dad is true. In the third grade I stole stuff from the refrigerator. My mom put in a camera. I got angry with her. At school that day I made a report that my mom hit me because I was angry and wanted her to get into trouble." Alexandra insisted that the report that her father kicked her was true. "That got him sent out of the house."

Alexandra said that she has stolen in the past. In the second grade she stole snacks. She gets nervous when she steals. She worries about getting caught. She gets nervous about lying because people might not believe her, and then she will get into trouble.

She never feels singled out. She used to think she was singled out when she was younger. "Mom has said she loves me the same. I'm just the oldest. I have more homework and responsibilities."

Regarding symptoms of ADHD, Alexandra said she does not race through her work, but she makes mistakes. She said she has difficulty sustaining attention because she always wants to change the conversation to herself. She denied that people complain that she does not listen to them. She says that she often does not follow through on instructions because "it takes too long." She stated she is very disorganized. She likes math homework but hates writing and reading. She often loses things. She is easily distracted. She is forgetful. She often forgets to bring her homework to school.

Regarding symptoms of hyperactivity, Alexandria is fidgety but does not leave her seat inappropriately. No one complains that she is hyperactive or too loud. She does not feel like she has a little motor inside of her. She does not talk excessively. She does not blurt out answers. It is easy for her to wait in line. She does not interrupt or intrude into conversations.

### **SUMMARY AND CASE FORMULATION:**

1.) From a very early age, Ally demonstrated a predisposition to lie and steal. This was likely before her parents had significant marital problems. Both neurologists who saw her commented that she was "asocial" and seemed to have little capacity for empathy. The diagnosis that best characterizes Ally's deceptive and antisocial behavior is Conduct Disorder. The DSM-5 notes that "Family-level risk factors [for conduct disorder] include parental rejection and neglect, inconsistent child-rearing practices, harsh discipline, physical or sexual abuse, lack of supervision, early institutional living, frequent changes of caregivers, large family size, parental criminality, and certain kinds of familial psychopathology (e.g., substance-related disorders)."

Allan attributed Ally's pathological behavior to Catherine's parenting – her early rejection of Ally, and Catherine's tendency to favor the two younger girls. It is impossible for me to assess this assertion since I was not involved with the family until recently, but while it is quite possible that Ally's experience of being parented by Catherine has contributed to her difficulties, it is unlikely this is the sole cause of her antisocial behavior. The recordings I saw/heard were indicative of parental rejection and harsh discipline on the part of both parents. The various documents I reviewed were clearly indicative of inconsistent child-rearing practices. Furthermore, Ally's exposure to intense parental conflict has likely exacerbated her condition, as has her parents' almost total inability to communicate with each other to provide behavioral limits. Additionally, given the early onset of her disorder, there are likely genetic components as well. Unfortunately, per the DSM, "... early-onset type predicts a worse prognosis and an increased risk of criminal behavior, conduct disorder, and substance-related disorders in adulthood. Individuals with conduct disorder are at risk for later mood disorders, anxiety disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, impulse-control disorders, psychotic disorders, somatic symptom disorders, and substance-related disorders as adults. ... Persistence is more likely for individuals with behaviors that meet criteria for the childhood-onset subtype and qualify for the specifier 'with limited prosocial emotions.' The risk that conduct disorder will persist is also increased by co-occurring ADHD and by substance abuse."

2.) Based on reports of both parents as well as my interviews with Ally, she meets criteria for ADHD – Inattentive Type, but her symptoms may be secondary to psychological distress related to her highly disrupted caretaking situation.

She endorsed the following symptoms: Although she does not race through her work, but she makes careless mistakes in her work. She has difficulty sustaining attention because she always wants to change the conversation to herself. She denied that people complain that she does not listen to them. She says that she often does not follow through with instructions because "it takes too long." She stated she is very disorganized. She likes math homework but hates writing and reading. She often loses things. She is easily distracted. She is forgetful. She often forgets to bring her homework to school.

Regarding symptoms of hyperactivity, Alexandria is fidgety but does not leave her seat inappropriately. No one complains that she is hyperactive or too loud. She does not feel like she has a little motor inside of her. She does not talk excessively. She does not blurt out answers. It is easy for her to wait in line. She does not interrupt or intrude into conversations.

3.) Although Ally does reasonably well academically, it is nevertheless possible that she struggles to understand certain types of information, and this may interfere with her ability to comply with various rules and regulations.

## **DSM-V DIAGNOSES:**

- **DSM 312.81 Conduct Disorder – Childhood-onset Type, with limited prosocial emotions (lack of remorse, shallow affect) – Mild severity**
- **V61.29 Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress**
- **DSM 314.00 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – Inattentive Type**

## **Recommendations and Initial Treatment Plan:**

1. I do not believe that individual psychotherapy will be especially helpful to Ally at this point in time. What she really needs is consistent behavioral management. This requires some type of family treatment. Given the current family situation, such an intervention will be more complicated, but if Allan and Catherine are not on the same page, and in relatively constant communication with each other (even if only electronically), I believe Ally's antisocial tendencies will not change. I believe she has already learned that she can play her parents against each other by telling each of them what they want to hear. Ally's behavior and statements may actually inflame the divorce litigation.

I would strongly recommend an intervention focused on parenting management with the goal of implementing a consistent set of behavioral rules across both households and the school. I have identified a group of NYU-affiliated providers in Westchester who may be able to provide this type of treatment, Elana Spira, Ph.D. and Jennifer Rosenblatt, Ph.D. They can be reached at 646-754-5000, which is the number for their care management team.

2. Neuropsychological testing will be very helpful in identifying the way Ally processes specific types of information, which may provide insight into her lack of empathy. It does not appear that she has had comprehensive neuropsych testing in the past. There are a number of highly regarded neuropsychologists in Westchester. I have worked with Dominick Auciello, PsyD at both NYU and the Child Mind Institute. He has an office in Rye. His phone number is 646 430 8999. I will be happy to talk with him prior to the testing so he knows what I think he should focus on.
3. Ally stated that she thought stimulant medication was helpful. This seems likely, given her problems with inattention, distractibility, and impulsivity. On the other hand, as noted above, Ally's attentional problems may be the result of psychological distress related to the family situation, so it may

make sense to hold off on meds until a behavioral plan is implemented. I would suggest that if the parties decide to go forward with a pharmacological intervention, they work with a child psychiatrist suggested by Drs. Spira or Rosenblatt.

4. I would hold off on stimulant medication for the time being, until the behavioral intervention has been implemented for a couple months. At that time, it may make sense to treat with a stimulant medication with the goal of decreasing impulsivity.
5. Finally, I am aware that another mental health professional is conducting a forensic custody evaluation. Both parties made assertions and provided documents that may be more relevant to a custody determination than to a diagnostic evaluation. I purposely did comment on such information since this is not a custody evaluation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Ravitz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alan Ravitz MD

**Board Certified in:**  
*General Psychiatry*  
*Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*  
*Forensic Psychiatry*