

# DEFENDER ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA

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DEFENDER

## Juvenile Special Defense Unit Psycho-Social Summary Prepared by Candace C. Chang, BA

**Client:** Tamala  
**DOB:** 1/3/89  
**PP#:** 1018057

### Reason for Referral

Tamala is a 17 year-old African-American female who is being processed as a Direct File Juvenile slated for Decertification. Tamala was arrested on May 23, 2006 and charged with Aggravated Assault, PIC, Simple Assault, and REAP.

Tamala is being referred for a psychological evaluation by his attorney, Michael J. Lovell, Esq., of the Defender Association of Philadelphia. The information contained in this report was obtained through interviews with Tamala; her maternal great-aunt, and review of School District of Philadelphia records.

### Family History

Tamala was born to [redacted] and [redacted] in Philadelphia, PA. [redacted] stated they all lived together for about four months before the relationship ended between he and [redacted]. According to Aunt [redacted], Tamala lived with her thereafter until the age of three when she returned to her mother's care. Aunt Darlene explained she took care of Tamala so early on because she loved her and wanted her around. Tamala then lived with her mother until the age of nine when Tamala and her younger siblings were picked up by their uncle since their mother was allegedly neglecting and abusing the children.

Tamala described the years she lived with her mother as "terrifying" because she had to deal with quite a bit of physical and emotional abuse under her supervision. Tamala expressed she had been beaten with shoes, cable cords and hangers, and, at least on one occasion, had to go to the hospital to get stitches on her face. Further, Tamala described her mother leaving her and her siblings alone in their home for weeks at a time. She stated their home was often without heat, water or electricity and the children were forbidden from answering the door or phone. Tamala went on to say she and her brothers continued to go to school until their clothes became too dirty and it became too humiliating for them. When asked what her mother was doing during

those weeks, Tamala said she was told her mother was "working with old people", but later realized her mother was lying to the family when she would return home with new clothing and food for herself. Finally, after two years of living this way Tamala reached out to her uncle who picked up the children and reported the incidents of physical abuse and neglect to the Department of Human Services. When asked if she was sexually abused, Tamala averted her gaze and did not respond. When pressed about the importance of this information Tamala continued to stare at the floor and began crying. She was adamant about not sharing such information during our interview.

Once settled in her uncle and Aunt Darlene's home, Tamala began to attend therapy through Carson Valley Community Services, referred by DHS. The family received kinship care during this time. [redacted] stated he had no idea what was going on with Tamala until about two years into her living with Aunt Darlene. Upon finding out, [redacted] said he tried to re-establish his relationship with Tamala, though it was difficult because she found it hard to trust him. In an effort to find other available family members, Aunt Darlene reached out to Tamala's grandfather, [redacted] who was living alone in New Jersey and had space for Tamala and her two younger brothers. Tamala and her brothers began visiting their grandfather on weekends and eventually moved to New Jersey to live with him. [redacted] said Tamala's mother found out where the children were living and harassed [redacted] frequently. Tamala states her grandfather became abusive to her brothers and all the children were then taken out of his home. Tamala was placed with her father and stepmother. Her brothers were placed in foster homes. [redacted] states DHS assisted him in court with gaining legal custody of Tamala and is under the impression he is still considered her legal guardian. Altogether, Tamala lived with [redacted] for over a year while attending Lindenwold High School. On the last day of that school-year, Tamala states her mother showed up at school and convinced her to move back to Philadelphia with her. According to [redacted], Tamala left a note for him stating she was running away, but not going to live with her mother. [redacted] states Tamala's note raised a red flag and he suspected [redacted] had something to do with Tamala's disappearance. [redacted] reported filing a Missing Persons Report with the New Jersey Police Department and hiring a private investigator, Mr. Barney, to find Tamala. Mr. Barney allegedly contacted the Philadelphia police department and [redacted] in an effort to find information about Tamala's whereabouts.

Tamala states when she returned to Philadelphia she did live with her mother. She said she naively believed her mother had changed and stabilized her living situation. Upon her move back to Philadelphia Tamala held two jobs, at Burger King and Foot Locker. According to her, [redacted] expected her to give her a portion of her paychecks, saying they were paying for bills and rent even though [redacted] was receiving welfare and SSI. Additionally, Tamala states her mother would not assist her in obtaining her own bank account, but attempted to have Tamala open up an account in her name. At one point, Tamala was staying with her mother's friend because, again, [redacted] apartment was reportedly without electricity and water. However, [redacted] pulled Tamala from that home when confronted about providing poor care for her daughter. From there, Tamala states she lived with [redacted] until May 15, 2006 when she went to work and moved in with Aunt [redacted] from there. Tamala says she never returned to her mother's apartment and all of her belongings are still there. She has had no contact with her mother since the incident leading to her arrest.

## **Educational History**

According to School District of Philadelphia records, Tamala attended Pennell Academics Plus School for kindergarten through second grade. Third through fifth grades were completed at Howe Academics Plus School. From there, Tamala attended Wagner School for the sixth through seventh grades then transferred to Ada Lewis Middle School for the eighth grade. Ninth grade was completed at Dobbins High School. Following the ninth grade, Tamala moved to New Jersey to live with her grandfather, then father, and attended Lindenwold High School for the tenth and eleventh grades. Those records were unavailable at the time of this writing.

Tamala states she absolutely loves school and is hoping to re-enroll into school this coming school-year to complete her twelfth grade year. Throughout her educational career, Tamala has earned As and Bs with an occasional C and has been placed in advanced level classes.

## **Juvenile History**

Tamala has no juvenile history.

## **Substance Abuse History**

Tamala states she tried marijuana once at fourteen years of age. She denies using any other drugs.

## **Conclusion**

Tamala is a 17 year-old female experiencing her first contact with the adult court system. Though Tamala's childhood was tumultuous and unkind, she found solace in attending school and holding down employment to earn extra money. The Department of Human Services provided out-patient therapy and counseling to her a few years ago. Tamala's family strongly feels she could benefit from continued therapy and counseling in light of the fragmented and chaotic relationship she has with her mother. Tamala's father and other extended family are a significant strength for her and she looks forward to completing the twelfth grade, earning her high school diploma and continuing her education at a nearby university. Tamala has high hopes to study Business in college.

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Forensic Evaluation August 30, 2006

NAME: TAMALA  
D.O.B. 1/3/1989  
PP# 1018057  
DATE OF  
REPORT: September 9, 2006

#### REFERRAL

Tamala is a 17 year-old young woman who was arrested May 23, 2006 and is charged with Aggravated Assault, Possession of Instruments of a Crime, Simple Assault and Reckless Endangerment of another Person. She is being processed as a direct file juvenile.

A psychological evaluation was requested by her attorney, Michael J. Lovell, Esq., of the Philadelphia Defender Association to determine amenability to treatment and consideration in a decertification hearing.

#### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Interview with Tamala and administration of the following psychological tests:-  
8/30/2006

Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Third Edition (WAIS-III)  
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second Edition (WIAT-II)  
Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI)

#### Review of records:

Social History prepared by a Defender Association of Philadelphia social worker-  
8/11/2006  
Criminal Complaint-5/25/2006  
Court History  
Member Cases Inquiry  
Juvenile History  
Probation Officer Note Pad-5/25/2006  
Philadelphia School District  
New Jersey Department of Education  
Department of Human Services  
Carson Valley Community Services

Transcript Preliminary Hearing-6/5/2006

Tamala was evaluated in a quiet and private room at the offices of the Defender Association of Philadelphia. The setting was ideal for interview and administration of psychological tests. Tamala was told that the evaluation was at the request of her attorney, that information gained during the assessment was not confidential and that a report would be prepared for her attorney. Tamala consented to the evaluation and authorized the release of a report to her attorney.

**BRIEF SOCIAL HISTORY**

Social history was gathered from the psycho-social summary prepared by the Defender Association social worker, a review of available records, and interview with Tamala.

Tamala ... is the daughter of ... and ... and ... separated when Tamala was about four months old. Tamala lived with her mother's aunt, ... until she was about three years old, when she was returned to her mother's care. When Tamala was nine years old, she and two younger brothers, were removed from their mother's care by an uncle due to neglect and abuse at the hands of their mother.

The children were neglected and abused both physically and emotionally by their mother. Neglect involved being left alone for weeks at a time, often with no heat, running water or electricity. The children were forbidden to answer the door or the telephone. They continued to go to school until they were so dirty and disheveled that they were too embarrassed to do so. The children were beaten with shoes, cables and hangers, and on at least one occasion medical attention was required for Tamala.

DHS provided services for Tamala through Carson Valley Community Services, and the children were placed with the Tuckers through kinship care. Upon hearing of the situation Tamala's father attempted to establish a relationship with his daughter. Eventually, Tamala and her younger brothers were placed in the home of their maternal grandfather, ... in New Jersey. ... was harassed by his daughter, and later he also abused the children and they were removed from his care. Tamala was placed with her father and stepmother, and her brothers were placed in foster care, where they remain. Relationships between Tamala, her father and stepmother were not good, and deteriorated further when Tamala's mother began to interfere. On the last day of Tamala's junior year, her mother showed up at school and persuaded Tamala to return with her to Philadelphia. ... filed a missing persons report and hired an investigator to find Tamala. ... is reported to have retained legal custody of Tamala.

Tamala wanted to believe that her mother had changed. This was not the case and Tamala was soon working two jobs and providing financial support to her mother who also received disability and welfare payments. The utilities (water and electricity) were cut off and Tamala moved first to the home of a family friend, and then on May 15 of this

year, back to the home of  
mother since the incident for which she is charged.

Tamala has had no contact with her

### **MEDICAL HISTORY**

No significant medical history was reported. Tamala denied any history of psychiatric treatment. Family psychiatric history is unknown, although Tamala reported that her mother receives disability payments for an unknown mental condition.

### **EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

Tamala attended Academic Plus School kindergarten through second grade. Third through fifth grades were completed at Howe Academic Plus School. Sixth and seventh grades were completed at Wagner School, and Tamala transferred to Ada Lewis Middle School for eighth grade. She entered ninth grade at Dobbins High School in Philadelphia, and then moved to New Jersey where she completed tenth and eleventh grade at Lindenwold High School. Tamala has no history of academic difficulties or any need for special educational services. Tamala's grades have been consistently good, primarily A's and B's, despite the neglect and abuse she was subjected to by her mother and then her grandfather.

### **DRUG AND ALCOHOL HISTORY**

Drug and alcohol abuse was denied. Tamala acknowledged trying marijuana once when she was fourteen years old.

Family drug and alcohol history is significant for alcohol dependence in Tamala's maternal grandmother. Tamala expressed her belief that her mother abuses drugs, but she has no direct evidence of this. A 42 year old cousin has a drug problem, most likely heroin. According to Tamala her father smokes marijuana.

### **ABUSE HISTORY**

Tamala has a history of neglect and abuse at the hands of her mother, and then later her maternal grandfather. Extended family members intervened, and Department of Human services provided assistance and supervision through kinship care December 2000 through September 2004. Eventually, the younger children were placed in foster care where they remain. Tamala noted that she has not seen her brothers (aged twelve and thirteen) for two years. She is disappointed about this, but says that no-one will give her information about their whereabouts or make arrangements for her to have visitation with them. According to Tamala they have been in two foster homes, and have been kept together. She also noted her belief that their father and their paternal grandmother have tried to gain custody of them.

Asked about any history of sexual abuse, Tamala became very quiet and looked to the floor. She said that she did not want to talk about this, and indicated that this was in her past, and was not ongoing. Her need for privacy was respected, but she was urged to consider finding a therapist skilled in this area to help her.