



And Doggy Too

Recently, we had a situation in which a single mother with three children discovered that she had terminal brain cancer and realized that in the near future she would no longer be able to provide care for her children. Because the mother had only one local person willing to assist her, she asked her service coordinator to help her plan for her children's future. The service coordinator helped the mother look at all of her options, and ultimately, the mother decided to contact a long-time friend who lived in Oregon, on the other side of the country. The friend agreed to assist the mother with her family and to take care of the children when the mother was no longer able to fulfill the role. The friend agreed to fly in and accompany the mother and her children back to Oregon on the train and bus.

The service coordinator had helped the family make arrangements for the move, but the mother had to be hospitalized prior to her friend's arrival. To avoid placing the children in state custody, the therapist and the service coordinator arranged for respite by placing the three children in the Walker House until the friend could arrive to take custody. The service coordinator made travel arrangements and took care of the paperwork and support services. The friend was able to leave with the children on a train, but unfortunately, the mother was still hospitalized.



When the mother was released from the hospital, she needed much assistance in coordinating her affairs in order to join her children. The mother did not want to leave the family pet behind, as there was no option for the dog but to go to the animal shelter. The service coordinator was able, with much effort, to secure permission for the dog to ride on the bus as a service dog with the mother. The service coordinator had to locate a muzzle for the

dog, get papers for the dog, and arrange transportation for the mother and the dog to the bus station. The service coordinator spent extra hours seeing that the mother had meals and was taking medication to make sure that she would be able to take the trip. The coordinator further helped the mother to sell furniture, ship family treasures, and pack needed items for travel. This service coordinator went above and beyond the call of duty to assure that the children would continue in the custody of their mother and that the family would remain together in the future.

Epilogue: Mother and doggy arrived safely after four days on the bus. The family was reunited. The service coordinator received a call and a card of thanks from the mother. The service coordinator received the Outstanding Service Coordinator Award of the Year for the state of Kentucky at the SANI/SED Conference.

By Joyce Vance