

Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) Final Report R.F.N.

March 25, 2014

Executive Summary

On December 11, 2013, the Department of Human Services (DHS) was notified that an infant, R.F.N., was found deceased and the cause of death was under investigation. DHS had received two previous child abuse reports concerning this child within the past year.

On December 11, 2013, DHS Director Erinn Kelley-Siel declared a CIRT be convened. This is a Mandatory CIRT pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute 419B.024. This is the final report of the CIRT.

Summary of Reported Incident and Background

On 09/19/2013, Oregon DHS received a child abuse report that R.F.N.'s parents were under investigation by Child Protective Services (CPS) in another state. They were believed to have fled from the investigation and to be living with extended family in Oregon. CPS in the other state received a child abuse report on 08/16/13 regarding the family and that report alleged the parents were using drugs and neglecting R.F.N. The report also alleged domestic violence perpetrated by the father and that he was physically abusive to R.F.N.

The report to Oregon DHS was assigned to a CPS worker as an Immediate Response. The worker attempted to locate the family at the address provided in the report but the owners of the home denied having any knowledge of the family's whereabouts. Additional efforts to locate the family were unsuccessful and the assessment was eventually closed with an unable to locate disposition.

On 10/29/2013, Oregon DHS received a second child abuse report regarding the family. The report indicated that there was a potential new address for the family. The report was again assigned to a CPS worker as an Immediate Response. In addition to other efforts to locate the family, the CPS worker made at least four unsuccessful attempts to contact the family at the address that had been provided.

The assessment was eventually closed with an unable to locate disposition.

On 12/11/13, Oregon DHS received a third child abuse report that R.F.N. was found deceased and the cause of death was under investigation. The father's whereabouts were unknown but the mother was being cooperative with law enforcement. The report was assigned to a CPS worker as a 5-day response and a CPS assessment was initiated while the criminal investigation continued. There are no known siblings to R.F.N. and no other children determined to be in the parents' home. The assessment was concluded on 3/31/14 after the CPS worker gathered further information from the mother and law enforcement. The assessment was coded Founded for Physical Abuse as to father resulting in the fatality. The criminal investigation continues at this time and the father's whereabouts remain unknown.

Pursuant to CIRT protocol, the CIRT team has met three times regarding this case. At the first meeting, the team reviewed preliminary information and identified issues of interest in the

case. A file review was conducted and the results were presented at the second meeting. At the second meeting, the team identified as an issue of interest, the communication between different programs within DHS when one program is attempting to locate an individual or family and another program is or might be contacted by that individual or family.

At the third and final meeting, the team met to discuss specific details of this case as it relates to information sharing within DHS, and identify and consider systemic issues.

Identification of Systemic Issues

The CIRT did not identify a systemic issue; however, it did highlight the challenges that exist within DHS to share confidential information between DHS programs:

- a) Information sharing between programs in DHS is difficult for staff due to State and Federal confidentiality laws.
- b) The Department has an historic awareness of the complicating factors in information sharing, and has been developing guidelines, trainings and protocols for staff around the sharing of confidential information between programs at DHS. The circumstances of this CIRT will inform the refinement of these protocols.

Audit Points

The agency will look at systems and processes across DHS programs where information sharing has been challenging, and may impact child safety:

- a) The agency will report back regarding possible improvements to communications between programs within DHS, and if applicable, initiate changes based on the findings.
- b) Emphasis will be given to programs with co-occurring Child Welfare cases.

Purpose of Critical Incident Response Team Reports

CIRT reports are to be used as tools for determining if there are systemic issues which can be addressed when there are incidents of serious injury or death involving a child who has had contact with DHS, or was the subject of a child protective services assessment by the department within the prior year.

The reviews are launched by the Department of Human Services Director to quickly analyze DHS actions in relation to each child. Results of the reviews are posted on the DHS website. Actions are implemented based on the recommendations of the CIRT team. The ultimate purpose is to review Department practices and recommend improvements, if any.