

60-Day CIRT REPORT
April 23, 2007

I. CASE UPDATE

Please refer to the 30 day report on this case for background information.

The criminal investigation in the case continues, with the Jackson County Sheriff's Office taking the lead for law enforcement and on media contacts. Caleb's 18 month old sister remains in foster care. Relatives are being studied as possible placement resources for her. Staff interviews have been completed. A total of eight staff from Jackson County child welfare were interviewed by managers from Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Division and the Office of Human Resources. Staff interviewed included Child Protective Service (CPS) Screeners who take initial reports of child abuse and determine whether the report needs to be investigated, CPS assessment workers who complete the assessment, and two CPS Supervisors. An HR decision was made regarding staff actions in this case, and appropriate corrective steps were taken.

II. ISSUES, ANALYSIS AND ACTION STEPS

a. Identified Issue: Use of collateral contacts in screening and assessment was inadequate in the referrals. Specifically, in three of the five referrals, important collateral contacts were not completed. These included Parole and Probation (Caleb's father was on parole), self-sufficiency (TANF) staff and extended family members. This likely delayed locating the family for the assessment, and would have given additional perspective important to the case decision.

Action Steps

- Jackson County supervisors and the child welfare program manager have reviewed with all child welfare staff policy and procedures, and local expectations, regarding collateral contacts. This action was completed in April. Managers will follow up during regular case consultations and will review case files to assure standards are in compliance with policy.

- The implementation of the Oregon Safety Model (OSM) has created another opportunity to reinforce this expectation. Local OSM implementation meetings are being used for this purpose.
- Jackson County child welfare managers have placed a high priority on completing protective service assessments within timelines specified in policy. Continued review of this data, and work with individual staff, will assist in reducing delays in making contact with families.

b. Identified Issue: Policy specifies that non-custodial parents be contacted as part of the assessment, unless there are extenuating circumstances documented in the case record. Additionally, in assessing and planning for child safety, the worker's task of locating and meeting with other family members is critical. In this case, the father was not contacted in three of the referrals, nor were other extended family members who may have significant information and/or could have been a support for the family.

Action Steps

- Jackson County workers and supervisors will utilize the expertise of CPS screening staff to assist in locating family members. These staff members have extensive experience utilizing computer searches and other technologies. By July, 2007, the branch will determine whether to permanently reassign this function to screening staff or to provide training to other staff to conduct this search.
- During April, 2007, supervisors reinforced expectations regarding locating and meeting with non-custodial parents and other extended family members, both to assure a complete assessment in compliance with policy and to provide for the safety of the children.
- For a separate but related purpose, the District Manager recently requested an independent review of the branch practice regarding working with relatives of children in care. This review should provide specific findings to be

used in setting expectations of staff regarding relative placements and communication with relatives.

c. Identified Issue: Identification of possible drug use, and utilization of testing and screening were not fully considered on at least one referral. Ms. Torresan exhibited relapse symptoms in admitting to marijuana use. In at least one referral, it was alleged that Caleb had ingested drugs. No testing was done as significant time had passed, but it would have been prudent to pursue testing.

Additionally, in this case, the roles and responsibilities of child welfare and law enforcement were confusing. While a close working relationship with law enforcement is important for child welfare, the roles must be clear and child welfare cannot defer to law enforcement regarding child safety related to substance abuse.

Action steps

- Training for local child welfare staff by addictions services experts will be completed by the end of May, 2007.
- The District and child welfare program managers are working with local law enforcement, and their local Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) to clarify responsibilities for child safety in cases involving substance abuse. CPS supervisors in Jackson County have reviewed roles and responsibilities when joint (CPS and LEA) investigations are conducted, and the program manager and supervisors have met with primary law enforcement contacts to clarify roles. A broader discussion with the MDT is planned for fall, 2007.
- The focus on child safety offers opportunities for staff and managers to evaluate drug use as it relates to child safety. Regular local forums are occurring between May and September, 2007; the topic of child safety when substance abuse is an issue will be included in these forums.