

60-Day CIRT REVIEW REPORT

March 20, 2007¹

I. CIRT REASON:

On December 17, 2006, the Douglas County Child Welfare office received a report that Cameron Dabbs, age 18 months, had been critically injured and had been transferred to Dorenbecher Hospital. The child presented with internal injuries and a skull fracture. On Monday, December 18, 2006, Jeremy Lee Wease was arrested and later indicted for first-degree assault and criminal mistreatment. Mr. Wease remains in custody. Mr. Wease was the boyfriend of the child's mother, Carrie McCullough, and had been staying in the home with her and her children.

II. CIRT RESPONSE AND CASE STATUS UPDATE:

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office is continuing the investigation of the events surrounding the injuries to this child. On December 17, 2006, Jeremy Lee Wease was indicted on one count of Assault in the First Degree and one count of Criminal Mistreatment in the First Degree. Law Enforcement is continuing to complete interviews and an investigation related to the child's mother.

Local Child Welfare staff continues to work closely with Law Enforcement. The child protective service assessment was completed and resulted in three founded dispositions. Cameron and his 4 siblings were placed in protective custody. The four siblings were placed in foster care. Cameron remains in Emmanuel Pediatric Rehabilitation, and is scheduled to move to a tier 4 medical foster home on Thursday January 18, 2007.

III. CIRT REVIEW PROCESS:

a. Case Review Process:

CAF child welfare program staff reviewed and evaluated all case record information including documents related to prior screening and assessment contacts with or about the family. Between 1996 and 2006 there were 10 child protective service referrals. Three of those referrals were founded for abuse and

¹ Finalization of this written report was delayed but the case review process was conducted pursuant to protocol timelines.

neglect. Founded means that there was reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect occurred. These referrals were reviewed as part of this process. Areas of focus for this review were compliance with policy, statute and practice focused on child safety.

b. Staff Interview Process:

CAF Administration and Human Resources staff interviewed six caseworkers, two supervisors, a child welfare manager and the district manager. The staff interview process was completed. HR determination was made regarding staff actions in this case and appropriate corrective steps have been taken. Information obtained in interviews was consistent with findings in this report.

IV. CIRT IDENTIFIED ISSUES, ANALYSIS, AND ACTION STEPS

1. Identified Issue: The case review indicated that workers may not have had an understanding of or did not utilize critical historical case and family information prior to responding to new Child Protective Services (CPS) reports.

Analysis:

Administrative rules for CPS screening and assessment provide clear direction with regard to the review and consideration of historical case information in making screening and CPS assessment decisions. The CIRT review of this case indicated that there was both time and opportunity to complete a review of history, but available information was not adequately reviewed and utilized. Included in the case history were referrals in which the caseworker had previously been unable to locate the family. The CIRT process reinforced that the review of this historical case information as well as review of issues that had not been addressed in previous referrals was a critical issue in this case. This finding indicates a need for additional training and management direction in this area of practice.

Action Steps:

- Douglas child welfare managers will provide required direction to staff regarding policy and practice expectations related to the review and consideration of historical case information including review of information not addressed when the family was not located in a previous referral. This action will be completed by April 15, 2007.
- Douglas child welfare managers, in conjunction with CPS program staff, will develop a process improvement plan to assure that workers complete extensive search efforts to locate families who are the subject of a child abuse referral. This will include the development and

implementation of an “Intake Search Tool” to assist caseworkers throughout the state in making thorough efforts to contact alleged victims and perpetrators in a timely manner. Caseworkers will not be permitted to close cases due to “Unable to Locate” until they have completed the efforts required by the “Intake Search Tool.” This tool will be developed and in draft form by May 1st and will be implemented by June 1, 2007.

- The state CPS program will work with Office of Information Systems (OIS) staff to determine if “unable to locate” dispositions on referrals can be more clearly flagged in the child abuse information system. A request has been made to OIS to make modifications to the current Family and Child Information System (FACIS), but changes to the system are limited at this time. The modifications will be accomplished in the next FACIS release. Exact time of release is unknown at this time.
- CAF central office will provide specific information in the procedure manual to direct caseworkers in making thorough search efforts to locate the family who is the subject in a CPS referral. Draft procedure will be developed by May 1, 2007. An information memorandum will be sent to the field by May 1, 2007.

2. Identified Issue: The file review indicates that response to CPS assessments included a more superficial review of presenting issues, but documentation did not include a comprehensive review of family functioning related to caregiver capacity and child safety. File documentation did not indicate that services were identified and/or offered.

Analysis:

The administrative rule in place at the time of this incident required the CPS worker to: utilize the Guided Assessment Process to identify threats to child safety; identify risk influences within the family system; and assess parental protective capacity to provide for the safety of children. The Oregon Safety Model was implemented on March 20, 2007, and revised rules now strengthen the focus on safety and provide improved direction to caseworkers in identifying the parent/caregiver’s willingness and ability to protect.

The CIRT review indicated that when a family is previously known to this local office, the prior knowledge may contribute to making assumptions about current parental capacity based on past experience instead of conducting a review of the documentation and assessing the current situation

each time a CPS referral is received. The analysis indicates that a more timely and comprehensive assessment of the family may have positively impacted the stability of this family and the safety of the children.

While this finding was a specific concern in this case, the review findings have statewide application. The Oregon Safety Model (OSM) implementation will provide additional training, reinforce administrative rule requirements, and establish procedures related to the comprehensive analysis of the parent's capacity to safely parent the child. The OSM requires ongoing review of parental protective capacity to determine the impact of changing family situations on child safety.

Action Steps:

- The central office program staff completed revision of all administrative rules and policies and the OSM was implemented on March 20, 2007. The OSM approach includes assessment of safety threats including whether there is a present danger to children, but also review of the underlying conditions that contribute to any ongoing deterioration of protective capacity of caregivers. Procedures have been developed to direct workers in performing this assessment. Implementation of the OSM and effective rule dates were March 20, 2007.
- Local child welfare managers, with the assistance of central office staff, will schedule a practice forum for local caseworkers focusing on the assessment of parental protective capacity throughout the life of the case. This will include consideration of changes in family functioning, stability, stressors, and child vulnerability. This will be completed by May 31, 2007.

3. Identified Issue: Assessments that were left open and incomplete because there was a delay in entering the written report in the FACIS system may have contributed to a perception that DHS is involved with a family and providing services and supervision. This may also be the perception when case plans are open but no services are being provided. Both of these issues were identified in the case review.

Analysis:

Administrative rule provides clear expectations for caseworkers and supervisors related to the timely completion of CPS assessments. Administrative rule requires that CPS assessments be completed within 30 days. Supervisors can grant an exception for another 30 days if critical

information is still needed to complete the assessment. Extension beyond that timeframe requires the approval of the child welfare program manager.

The review of this case revealed that, during 2006, the closure of one assessment as “unable to locate” without adequate search and the lack of timely response and search on a second assessment resulted in the delayed evaluation of this family’s stability and assessment of their parenting of the children.

Timely and adequate completion of CPS assessments was a specific area of concern in this case. Performance in regard to timely completion of assessments has statewide application and is a high priority for CAF field administration.

Action Steps:

- Douglas child welfare managers have developed a management action plan to ensure that overdue assessments are completed by April 10, 2007.
- The District manager will develop and implement a plan to have all assessments completed timely with no more than 10% variance by July 31, 2007.

4. Finding: The case review indicated that there may not have been adequate follow through to make contact with parents, victims and collateral contacts in response to CPS reports. The case review also indicates that assessment documentation did not indicate that children were adequately interviewed and/or observed during assessment activities.

Analysis:

Administrative rule provides clear direction and expectations regarding the interviews of parents and children during the assessment process. Contact with collateral sources is critical and is described in the screening and assessment administrative rule. The CIRT review indicated that this was a specific practice concern in this case.

Action Step:

- The Douglas office will utilize the state CPS program staff to do a practice forum on this topic. This will include: review of administrative rule related to interviews with parents; interview and observation of children; and appropriate documentation of interviews. The forum is to be completed by May 1, 2007.

V. NEXT STEPS:

Program and field administration will review monthly the action steps identified in this report to assure timely completion and achieve necessary practice improvement.

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