

30 Day CIRT REPORT
March 26, 2007

I. CASE BACKGROUND/REASON FOR CIRT

On February 22, 2007, Caleb Hearne, age 30 months, was transported to Rogue Valley Medical Center in Medford, where he was pronounced dead. The initial medical examination revealed large bruises on several parts of his body and two black eyes. These injuries were determined not to be the result of resuscitation efforts.

It was estimated that Caleb may have been dead for up to two hours before his mother, Trisha Torresan, called 911.

DHS has previous knowledge and involvement with this family. Prior to the report of Caleb's death, the most recent report was a referral received on 1/29/07 from local law enforcement, per protocol, regarding bruising to Caleb. This referral was closed at screening.

This case was declared to be a CIRT on February 25, 2007.

II. FAMILY HISTORY AND CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCE

Caleb lived with his 23 year old mother Trisha, 18 month old sister and mother's boyfriend in Talent, Oregon. Caleb's father has resided with the family intermittently since Caleb's birth. He is also the father of Caleb's sister. He is not married to Caleb's mother, Trisha.

DHS has prior involvement with this family based on six protective service referrals. The first referral was made by Coffee Creek Correctional Institution, where Trisha was incarcerated and due to give birth to Caleb. This referral was made to assure that placement was available for Caleb, and a plan was developed for Trisha's sister to take the child.

Two of the referrals were assessed and found to be Unable to Determine. These findings were made due to delays in locating the family. A referral in November of 2006 was founded for Threat of Harm based on Domestic Violence witnessed by the children; the children's father, who was the perpetrator, was arrested and

incarcerated. The fifth referral on this case was a “cross-report” from Law Enforcement on January 29, 2007, when law enforcement responded to a call regarding Caleb’s unusual behavior. Caleb was seen by medical personnel the following day and determined to have flu-like symptoms. The most recent referral was generated when Caleb was taken to the hospital on 2/22/07.

Drug-related issues have been reported on several of these, including concerns that drugs and drug paraphernalia were accessible to the children and concerns that Trisha was using drugs. Following Caleb’s death, his sister was placed in foster care. Services are not being provided to Trisha at this time.

a. Criminal Investigation and Child Protective Services Assessment.

The criminal investigation is continuing, and DHS is working with local law enforcement in the investigation. The DHS Child Protective Service (CPS) investigation has been completed.

b. Media Response

The Jackson County Sheriff’s Office has taken the lead for media response. Family members and friends have been contacted by the media as well.

III. CIRT REVIEW PROCESS

a. Case Review Process

As outlined in CIRT protocol, staff from DHS Children, Adults and Families Division have completed a review of the case, including the current and previous assessments, service plans and medical information. This information formed the foundation for the issues identified in the following sections.

b. Staff Interview Process

The CIRT case review identified areas for analysis and action. These issues will be investigated through the staff interview process and further analysis by local and central office DHS staff.

V. IDENTIFIED ISSUES

a. Policy Issues

- In three of the five assessments of this family, use of collateral contacts was limited. The case reviewers noted examples of contacts that may have provided additional information, including Parole and Probation, Self-sufficiency (TANF) programs and extended family members. In at least one assessment, the lack of collateral contacts delayed the contact with the family. Policy provided some guidance, but the Child Welfare Procedure Manual, not available at the time of this incident, provides clarification regarding expected collateral contact.
- Child Welfare policy requires that, as part of the CPS assessment, the non-custodial parent(s) be contacted by CPS workers. In three of the referrals, this was not done. In some instances, staff relied upon other information regarding the father's location, and in other instances, the case record simply does not include this information.
- Policy requires that CPS assessments be completed within 30 days, or within 60 days if the supervisor grants an exception. In this case, two referrals were not completed within the 60 day timeframe because DHS was not able to locate the family.

b. Practice Issues

- The policy regarding collateral contacts was not diligently applied in this case. Local processes and expectations must reflect a higher level of vigilance in using collateral contacts. Of particular note regarding contacts is the expectation of locating and speaking with extended family members, including non-custodial parents. This practice supports a comprehensive assessment, and provides a foundation for safety planning for the children. Jackson County performance in this case did not reflect thorough attention to this practice.

c. Training Issues

- Training on expectations and methods for using collateral contacts in assessments should be provided for Jackson County staff. This includes use of the case record history in the FACIS computer system and other techniques to locate collateral contacts and family members.
- Drug abuse was a theme through many of the referrals on this case, as it is for many families involved in the child welfare system. Child welfare has established partnerships with addictions experts locally to support treatment for families, including training opportunities for staff. Local Addiction Recovery Teams (ART), partnerships between DHS and local providers, also provide training for staff.

In this case, an indicator of relapse was apparently overlooked, and testing of the mother, her boyfriend and the two children did not occur, even though exposure to drug paraphernalia was alleged. Additional training may be required for local staff.

d. Personnel Issues

- Staff interviews are scheduled to be conducted within two weeks, and will indicate any personnel issues.