

30-Day CIRT REVIEW REPORT

I. Introduction

The Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) protocol was adopted by the Oregon Department of Human Services on November 1, 2004. This protocol was developed for the following purposes:

- To specify the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare procedures that will be used when a critical incident occurs;
- To increase the Department's accountability to the public;
- To ensure timely responses by the Department with respect to any critical incident in Child Welfare; and
- To increase the Department's ability to recommend necessary changes to statutes, administrative rules, policies and procedures, practices, training and personnel matters.

The first CIRT was launched on December 8, 2004. The following is a 30-day report as required by the protocol and includes initial findings, preliminary recommendations and next steps. During the next 30-day period, DHS will continue a comprehensive review of these preliminary findings and assess the degree to which these findings have statewide implications. DHS has also arranged for an independent expert to begin consultation on the two Metro cases and to begin evaluating implications for statewide practice.

II. CIRT Reason: Critical injury to child in Department of Human Services (DHS) foster home reported on December 7, 2004.

On December 7, 2004 at approximately 12:30 p.m., Jordan, age 5, was transported by Lifeflight to OHSU. She had a skull fracture and a possible brain bleed. She was in a coma. Medical staff suspected that injuries were non-accidental. Jordan was described as thin and malnourished. The child, along with her three siblings, resided in the foster home. Also in the home were the foster parents' three biological children and a Korean foreign exchange student. A criminal investigation and child protective services assessment were initiated by the Clackamas County Sheriff's office and child welfare on December 8, 2004.

III. CIRT Response and Case Status Update:

a. Criminal Investigation:

Sergeant Alan Alderman of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office was identified as the law enforcement representative on this CIRT team. Sergeant Alderman and his staff worked closely with child welfare staff in proceeding through the criminal investigation. Interviews and comprehensive review of relevant information resulted in the arrest and temporary incarceration of the identified foster parents. The foster mother has been charged with Assault II and Criminal Mistreatment I. The foster father was charged with Criminal Mistreatment I. Law enforcement is continuing the process of completing the criminal investigation.

b. Child Protective Service Assessment and Case Status Update:

A Child Protective Service (CPS) assessment regarding the care of the foster children and the foster parents' care of their own children was initiated in coordination with the criminal investigation. The assessment will be completed within 30 days.

Children:

Jordan was released from the hospital and has been placed in a foster home. She has continued to gain weight since she left the hospital. Her three siblings have also been placed in a foster home. The foster parents' own children have been placed in a different foster home. The foreign exchange student was placed by the exchange organization with another family.

c. Media Response:

Pursuant to the protocol, the CIRT lead designated a local media lead. Joel Manley of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) served as the initial point of contact for media inquiries. DHS and CCSO held a joint news conference and issued separate news releases. DHS and CCSO have responded to more than 100 inquiries from print and broadcast media. For more detail about media coverage, see attachment.

IV. CIRT Review Process:

a. Case Review Process:

A case review was conducted at the Clackamas County child welfare office by technical assistance staff from the DHS central office. The CIRT team developed a list of questions and areas of focus for technical assistance staff. A review was completed of the foster child's case file, the foster care certification and adoption record and related case information. All case documentation was reviewed for compliance with administrative rule and policy as well as approved practice. The technical assistance staff completed a written summary of the information gathered through the process and an analysis of that information from their perspective. The review process was used to assist in the development of questions for the subsequent staff interview process.

b. Staff Interview Process:

Interviews have been completed with nine staff at the Clackamas County branch office by representatives from DHS human resources and administration. Staff interviewed included the caseworkers for the foster children, the certification/adoption worker for the foster family, a placement team worker, and four social service assistants who provided transportation for the children to visits.

Additional interviews are being scheduled for the casework supervisors, former caseworkers for the foster children, the Court Appointed Special Advocate, treatment providers and the CPS worker and supervisor.

Completion of the interviews and analysis of the results will be accomplished within 30 days.

V. Initial Findings and Preliminary Recommendations:

a. Systems Issues

- **Finding:** There was an apparent lack of coordination, continuity and communication among the multiple caseworkers and casework assistants assigned to work on this foster care case.

Recommendation: Central office program staff will work with Clackamas County child welfare to strengthen and reinforce communication, coordination and delineation of caseworker assignment, role and responsibility. These issues will be evaluated statewide.

- **Finding:** Screening coordination between the Multnomah County Hotline and the Clackamas County office on this foster care case may have contributed to inadequate review of information.

Recommendation: Central office program staff will examine child welfare practice and the Office of Information Systems will examine the related information system. Technical assistance will be provided to the Multnomah County Hotline and Clackamas County child welfare office, including review of existing protocols and child welfare information system limitations, identification of areas for improvement, and development of an action plan.

- **Finding:** The records in this foster care case were incomplete and were not well organized.

Recommendation: Central office program staff will work with the local office to assure that case records are complete and well organized.

b. Policy:

- **Finding:** CPS screening decisions in this foster care case appear to be inconsistent with policy.

Recommendation: The completion of staff interviews will determine the extent of this apparent inconsistency.

- **Finding:** Frequent and announced visits were made with the foster children. However, documentation in case notes regarding face to face contact in this case was too limited to determine the quality, content and detail of the visits.

Recommendation: DHS will review current policy to clarify the documentation requirements for face to face contact.

c. Training:

- **Finding:** The foster care case review indicated that responsibility for mandatory reporting was unclear or was not accomplished in a timely manner.

Recommendation: Central office program staff will assure that mandatory reporter training for local office and community partners occurs.

d. Practice:

- **Finding:** Medical follow through on the foster children was delegated to the foster parents. The lack of caseworker knowledge of and access to medical concerns and records impacted adequate treatment planning for the foster children.

Recommendation: Central office program staff is assessing the adequacy of current rules to ensure that medical information for foster children is in the case record.

- **Finding:** Treatment providers' recommendations were not implemented, and therefore, not documented in the child's file. Plans for health care were not documented.

Recommendation: Central office staff will develop procedures to assure that the recommendations of treatment providers are documented and implemented.

VI. Next Steps:

- Human Resources and Administration will continue interviews with staff and evaluate personnel related information. This will be completed within the next 30 days.
- Clackamas County child welfare staff will continue to coordinate with the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office on the completion of the criminal investigation and child protective services assessment.
- Expert consultation from NRCCPS is scheduled for the review of policy and practice in this foster care case. The broader focus will be on how critical decisions regarding safety of children are being made in Oregon's child welfare cases.