

**CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM INITIAL 30 DAY
REPORT
A.M.**

December 21, 2009

Executive Summary

On October 16, 2009, twenty-three month old A.M. died as a result of serious head injuries, including a skull fracture and bleeding in her brain. The circumstances surrounding the death are currently under law enforcement investigation. The Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) had received referrals on the family prior to the report about the fatal injuries.

The Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) has identified three issues regarding the Department's work in this case: first, the comprehensiveness of Child Protective Services (CPS) assessments, including the sufficiency of supervisor reviews when approving CPS assessments; second, the need for specific guidance to workers with respect to comprehensive assessments when one or both of the parents are teenagers; and finally, the assessment of the safety of a child when domestic violence is present and one or both of the parents are teenagers.

The CIRT team has made recommendations for action immediately relating to the evaluation of those issues, and may make additional recommendations as the review of the case continues. Future reports will account both for follow through on the recommendations in this initial report and on any additional recommendations that are needed.

Summary of Reported Incident

On October 12, 2009, twenty-three month old A.M. was hospitalized after presenting with serious head injuries, including a skull fracture and bleeding in her brain. A report was received by DHS and was assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation. DHS and law enforcement responded to assess and investigate for possible physical abuse and criminal activity. A.M. died at the hospital on October 16, 2009, as a result of these injuries. The circumstances surrounding the death are still under law enforcement investigation.

On October 21, 2009, DHS Director Dr. Bruce Goldberg ordered that a CIRT be convened. This is the initial 30 day report of the CIRT team.

Background

As noted, the criminal investigation in this case is ongoing. Rather than delay release of this initial report pending conclusion of that investigation, the CIRT Team decided to release this initial report and provide details regarding the Department's history with this family in a subsequent report.

Systemic Issues

A file review was conducted and the results were presented to the Critical Incident Response Team. The Team identified three issues regarding the Department's work and is recommending that additional steps be taken to determine if the issues are systemic.

Issue #1: How the Department ensures that CPS assessments are comprehensive – both with respect to the work of the assessor and the sufficiency of supervisor reviews when approving or signing-off on assessments.

Issue #2: How the Department assesses teen parents. Specifically, does the Department provide sufficient guidance to workers on how to conduct comprehensive assessments when one or both of the parents of the alleged child victim are teenagers.

Issue #3: How the Department assesses the safety of a child when domestic violence is present and one or both of the parents are teenagers.

Preliminary Recommendations

- The CPS Program Manager, with assistance from members of the Critical Incident Response Team, will seek the assistance of the National Resource Center on Child Protective Services regarding the challenges the Department is experiencing with respect to the implementation of the Oregon Safety Model expectations of comprehensive CPS assessments and the timelines by which to complete them. By January 2010, a report will be provided back to

the Critical Incident Response Team and will be incorporated into the final CIRT report.

- Immediately, a team of experts will be convened to conduct a review of the Department's rules, policies and procedures surrounding safety assessments that involve teen parents. The Teen Parent Safety Team will be comprised of persons with expertise in providing services to and advocating on behalf of teens. The team will provide preliminary recommendations, within the next 90-days, with a final report and recommendations to the department no later than March 30, 2010.
- The CPS Program recently revised the 3rd edition of the domestic violence practice guidelines. The guidelines are currently being reviewed by a group of domestic violence experts representing domestic violence shelters from around the state. This group of experts will provide guidance and recommendations about the sufficiency of the document. They will be asked to provide practice recommendations related to teen parents and domestic violence. They will be asked to provide these recommendations no later than March 1, 2010 in order to inform the Teen Parent Safety Team work.

Audit Points

None at this time

Purpose of Critical Incident Response Team Reports

Critical incident reports are to be used as tools for department actions when there are incidents of serious injury or death involving a child who has had contact with DHS. The reviews are launched by the Department Director to quickly analyze DHS actions in relation to each child. Results of the reviews are posted on the DHS Web Site. Actions are implemented based on the recommendations of the CIRT Review Team.

The ultimate purpose is to review department practices and recommend improvements. Therefore, information contained in these incident reports includes information specific only to the Department's interaction with the child and family that are the subject of the CIRT Review.