

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM INITIAL and FINAL REPORT J.H.

October 24, 2014

Executive Summary

On February 16, 2014, the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Welfare program was notified that 20 month old child J.H. was found deceased in his family home. It was determined by Child Welfare and Law Enforcement that J.H.'s death was due to Neglect. J.H.'s mother and father have been indicted on charges of manslaughter, criminal mistreatment and child neglect in association with J.H.'s death.

On February 19, 2014, DHS Director Erinn Kelley-Siel declared a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) be convened. This is a Mandatory CIRT pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute 419B.024. This is the initial and final report of the CIRT.

On February 20, 2014, the initial CIRT meeting was held and a case file review was initiated.

On March 12, 2014, the team met again to go over the case file review. Several areas were identified that required further action.

On May 13, 2014, the final CIRT meeting was held. The primary systemic issue the team identified focused on the comprehensiveness of assessments that were done. This same issue has been identified in prior CIRTs, and DHS Child Welfare has been taking steps to remediate this problem. After review, the CIRT Team concluded that no additional recommendations relating to those systemic issues are needed at this time.

Summary of Reported Incident and Background

Since 2007, the Department was contacted five times regarding J.H.'s family, including notification of the fatality that occurred on 2/16/14. Of the five reports, one was Closed at Screening and four were assigned for Child Protective Services (CPS) assessment. Following is a more detailed summary of those prior contacts:

On July 09, 2007, DHS received a report that J.H.'s older sibling, an infant at the time, was not being properly cared for. The report indicated J.H.'s father was smoking marijuana in the home. This report was Closed at Screening. A review of the case file indicates this report qualified for assignment for CPS investigation.

On June 19, 2008, DHS received a report that the mother was the victim of Domestic Violence in the presence of J.H.'s 15 month old sibling. The report was assigned for a CPS assessment. During the assessment a history of violence by the father was

discovered including escalating incidents within the month prior to the CPS investigation. The mother's boyfriend (J.H.'s father) minimized his behaviors. This assessment was coded as Founded for Domestic Violence and the case was closed. This disposition was correct, however pursuant to the safety analysis, continued DHS involvement was required to ensure child safety.

On January 11, 2012, DHS received a report that the family home was filthy, the children were being locked in their rooms and the oldest child's teeth were rotted. The caller also expressed concerns about marijuana use, and the parents' mental health issues.

This referral was assigned as an Immediate Response. The worker observed and documented the condition of the home to be above minimum community standards, with the exception of the bathroom which was subsequently cleaned by the family. The worker observed locks on the outside of the children's doors, and the mother explained that the locks were there when they moved in. The locks were removed during the course of the assessment. The worker noted no concerns regarding the condition of the children. This referral was coded as Unfounded. It was difficult for the CIRT Team to determine whether this disposition was correct based on several issues raised during the CPS assessment that were not fully assessed.

On April 17, 2013, DHS received a report the mother was locking the children in their rooms during nap time. If the children wake up during their naptime, they pound on the door. The caller additionally reported the mother won't let the children out of their locked bedroom until she's done cleaning the home. The caller indicated the mother does not provide adequate supervision when the children are outside playing.

The referral was assigned as an Immediate Response. The worker documented the condition of the home and noted that there were locks on the outside of the parents' and the girls' bedrooms. This time, the mother explained that they had to turn the door handles around because the children would lock themselves in their room. The mother admitted allowing the children to play outside in the front yard on the trampoline while she was inside the home, indicating she observes them via an open door. It was not documented if the locks on the doors were removed during the course of this assessment. This assessment was coded as Unfounded for Neglect. The CIRT Team identified additional concerns that were noted in the DHS case file that required further investigation, however the case was closed.

Systemic Issue Identified

The systemic issue identified by the CIRT Team was the lack of adherence to the Oregon Safety Model specific to comprehensive assessments. Comprehensiveness of assessments is an issue that has been identified in multiple past CIRT reports and has led to a range of actions by the department to address the issue. A summary of those actions are found in the CIRT report on N.W. The training and support for this branch related to the OSM occurred after the assessments in this case.

Purpose of Critical Incident Response Team Reports

Critical incident reports are 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.