



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

REPORT ON THE FATALITY OF:

Alexander Pfaff

Date of Birth: 09/15/2004
Date of Death: 09/05/2013
Date of Oral Report: 09/01/2013

FAMILY KNOWN TO:

Cumberland County Children and Youth Services

REPORT FINALIZED ON:

07/09/14

Unredacted reports are confidential under the provisions of the Child Protective Services Law and cannot be released to the public.
(23 Pa. C.S. Section 6340)

Unauthorized release is prohibited under penalty of law.
(23 Pa. C.S. 6349 (b))

Reason for Review:

Senate Bill 1147, Printer's Number 2159 was signed into law on July 3, 2008. The bill became effective on December 30, 2008 and is known as Act 33 of 2008. As part of Act 33 of 2008, DPW must conduct a review and provide a written report of all cases of suspected child abuse that result in a child fatality or near fatality. This written report must be completed as soon as possible but no later than six months after the date the report was registered with ChildLine for investigation.

Act 33 of 2008 also requires that county children and youth agencies convene a review when a report of child abuse involving a child fatality or near fatality is indicated or when a status determination has not been made regarding the report within 30 days of the oral report to ChildLine. Cumberland County has convened a review team in accordance with Act 33 of 2008 related to this report on September 18, 2013.

Family Constellation:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth:</u>
[REDACTED]	Mother	[REDACTED] 1981
[REDACTED]	Sibling	[REDACTED] 2006
[REDACTED]	MGM	Unknown
[REDACTED]	MGF	Unknown
Alexander Pfaff	Victim Child	09/15/2004
[REDACTED]	Father	[REDACTED] 1978

Notification of Child (Near) Fatality:

Victim Child was brought into Hershey Medical Center with an acute gunshot wound to the back of child's head on September 1, 2013. Child was brought [REDACTED] via ambulance. Cumberland County Children and Youth services (CYS) were notified about the incident by the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] on September 1, 2013. Incident happened at the mother's paramour's home at [REDACTED] after the mother took [REDACTED] and fell asleep.

Summary of DPW Child Fatality Review Activities:

The Central Region Office of Children, Youth and Families obtained and reviewed all current and past case records pertaining to the [REDACTED] family. Follow up interviews were conducted with the caseworker, the supervisor and the agency director on September 18, 2013. The regional office also participated in the County Internal Fatality Review Team meeting on September 18, 2013. The child died from a single gunshot wound to the head on September 5, 2013. The death is being ruled a [REDACTED]. The case was [REDACTED].

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

Franklin County Children and Youth Services had prior involvement with the family. [REDACTED] services ended in late 2009. Franklin County's initial referral was received on 6/1/2008

concerning drug usage by the parents. Case was accepted for In-home services on 7/22/2008. In March 2009, the In-home worker placed the children due to supervision and drug issues. Children were in foster care until returned home with parents on 2/18/2010. Case was then closed from In-home services on 6/25/2010. Biological father is active with probation. Mother has received [REDACTED]

On August 13, 2013, Cumberland County Children and Youth services received a report that the house on [REDACTED] was dirty, fleas were in the home, the mother sleeps all day, the kids had to fend for themselves and a family member was using heroin. Cumberland County CYS made several attempts to see the home but no one answered. Subsequently, a call was made and the caseworker scheduled a time to meet with mother and her two boys at the mother's residence in [REDACTED]. On August 22, 2013 mother reported that the children were no longer living with her but were with their grandparents [REDACTED]. On August 30, 2013, the caseworker made contact with Mother and grandmother to confirm the children's living situation. The children were residing in [REDACTED] and were enrolled in school there. On 9/1/2013, Cumberland County CYS received a report from [REDACTED] that that a child was brought into Hershey Medical Center with an acute gunshot wound to the back of the child's head. The victim child was brought to the hospital by ambulance.

Prior to the initial report on August 13, 2013 Cumberland County Children and Youth services had not had any contact with the family.

Circumstances of Child Fatality and Related Case Activity:

[REDACTED] mom's paramour was not at home and [REDACTED] was sleeping in the paramour's bed. Alex was sitting on the edge of the bed watching TV when six year old [REDACTED] came into the room. He found the 22 caliber gun between the mattress and bed frame and began playing with it. The gun went off and struck Alex in the back of the head. The mother remained sleeping through the incident until [REDACTED] woke Mother up and told her that he shot [REDACTED] Alexander.

Mother called 911 and was told to lay Alex on the bed and put pressure on the wound. When paramedics arrived, Alex was in the same position and Mother was sleeping. Victim Child was lying on the living room floor bleeding from his head.

Victim Child was brought into Hershey Medical Center with an acute gunshot wound to the back of child's head on September 1, 2013. Child was brought [REDACTED] via ambulance. Incident happened at Mother's paramour's home at [REDACTED] after Mother took [REDACTED] and fell asleep.

Current Case Status:

The child died from a single gunshot wound to the head on September 5, 2013. The death is being ruled a homicide. The case was [REDACTED] the child's younger sibling is in agency foster care. The sibling has participated in [REDACTED] The agency pursued relative resources to include father and grandparents; however, none of the resources were able to be full time or were deemed inappropriate. Biological father is [REDACTED] active with the probation department.

The case was [REDACTED] by Cumberland County CYC on 9/30/2013 naming the [REDACTED] as the perpetrator of [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] is supported by the fact that the perpetrator knew that the guns were in the presence of the children and [REDACTED]. The sibling completed a [REDACTED] on 9/4/2013 where he stated that he had seen the two guns in various locations in the home. The perpetrator admitted to taking [REDACTED] and that [REDACTED] was sleeping during the incident. The identified child was pronounced dead on 9/5/2013 as a result of the injuries sustained. The [REDACTED] resulted in [REDACTED] being charged on 1/19/2014.

Cumberland County Services: [REDACTED] has participated in [REDACTED]. The perpetrator [REDACTED] will be required to participate in [REDACTED].

On September 6, 2013, Franklin County Children and Youth services took over the case, as they have history with this family.

County Strengths and Deficiencies and Recommendations for Change as Identified by the County's Child Fatality Report:

- Strengths:
Cumberland County Children and Youth services [REDACTED] the case on September 30, 2013 and entered into an agreement with Franklin County Children and Youth services to [REDACTED].
Since this was being transferred between the two counties.
- Deficiencies:
None
- Recommendations for Change at the Local Level:
The agency has discussed how to get the message out about gun safety and the importance of educating everyone.
- Recommendations for Change at the State Level:
It was recommended that State Police go into schools to do presentations on gun safety issues

Department Review of County Internal Report:

County report was received on September 27, 2013. The department concurs with the findings and recommendations.

Department of Public Welfare Findings:

- County Strengths:
Cumberland County CYC [REDACTED] the case on September 30, 2013 and entered into an agreement with Franklin County Children and Youth services [REDACTED].

- County Weaknesses:
None
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance:
None

Department of Public Welfare Recommendations:

The Department concurs with the findings and recommendations of the County report.