



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:**



**BORN: April 5, 2005**  
**DATE OF INCIDENT: April 4, 2014**  
**DATE OF ORAL REPORT: April 4, 2014**

**FAMILY WAS NOT KNOWN TO:**

**Crawford County Children and Youth Services**

**REPORT FINALIZED ON:**

**March 12, 2015**

This report is confidential under the provisions of the Child Protective Services Law and cannot be released.  
(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, DHS 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. Crawford County was not required to convene a review team in accordance with Act 33 of 2008 related to this report.

**Family Constellation:**

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth:</u>
██████████	Victim child	4/5/2005
██████████	Mother	██████████ 1969
██████████	Father	██████████ 1973

**Notification of Child Near Fatality:**

On April 4, 2014, the child had been at his father's house for a visit. The child had only been at his father's house for about fifteen minutes when the father called the mother to tell her that he and the child had been playing ball in the yard. The father had thrown the ball in the air when the child and the dog tried to catch the ball at the same time. The dog and the child bumped heads. The dog is a large lab mix that weighs approximately 100 pounds. The child weighs approximately 65 pounds.

The child sustained a baseball size indentation to the left side of his head behind his ear. The mother took the child to Meadville Medical Center. ██████████ was done on the child and it showed a ██████████. The child was ██████████ and transported by helicopter to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. The treating physician at Meadville Medical Center stated that the injury was not consistent with the story. The treating physician certified the child to be in critical condition which certified this incident as a near fatality.

**Summary of DHS Child Near Fatality Review Activities:**

The Western Region Office of Children, Youth and Families obtained and reviewed all case records pertaining to the family. The family was opened for

intake services from April 4, 2014 to April 15, 2014 when the case was unfounded. Therefore, a Near Fatality Review team meeting was not required.

**Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:**

Crawford County Children and Youth Services did not have prior involvement with the family.

**Circumstances of Child Near Fatality and Related Case Activity:**

On April 4, 2014, the child was assessed at Meadville Medical Center for a head injury. While he was in [REDACTED], the child had a seizure. [REDACTED] was performed on the child. The primary impression was that the child had a [REDACTED]. The secondary impression was an [REDACTED], seizure, and [REDACTED]. The child [REDACTED] and transferred by helicopter to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

Crawford County Children and Youth Services (CCCYS) received a report of suspected child abuse on April 4, 2014. A referral was submitted to the local law enforcement agency given that the child had sustained a serious physical injury. CCCYS requested that Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families (ACOCYF) conduct a courtesy visit to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh to see the child and family. That visit occurred on April 5, 2014. During this visit, the child was alert and talkative and explained that he was not fearful and wished to go back to his father's house to visit. Both parents were at the hospital and, even though they are divorced, they co-parent the child. The hospital did not have any concerns for the child or the parents. The ACOCYF caseworker took pictures of the child's injuries.

The [REDACTED] at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh saw the child before he [REDACTED] on April 7, 2014. At the time the [REDACTED] saw the child, the child did not report any headaches, blurry vision, or any other physical problems. The [REDACTED] requested that the child tell her the story of what transpired prior to him getting injured. The child claimed that he bumped heads with the dog when they went to catch a ball. The [REDACTED] did not have concerns that the injury was from an abusive incident.

[REDACTED]

The child [REDACTED] to his mother's care to follow-up with [REDACTED] as instructed.

The caseworker spoke to the mother on April 7, 2014. The mother claimed that the father's dog was overly friendly and was not trained properly. She was

concerned that the father would not keep the dog away from the child while he heals. She also felt that the father's house was dirty and in disrepair.

The caseworker made a home visit to the mother's home on April 9, 2014. The mother stated that the child was to take it easy for the next 6 to 8 weeks and was not to participate in any activities for a few months; any bump on his head could cause [REDACTED].

The father agreed to keep the dog in the basement or outside when the child visits. The father spent the day with the child on April 9, 2014 prior to the mother returning home from work. The child reported that they had played games and it was a good day. The child said that he knew that the father's house was not the best but he was not fearful of the father or the dog. The child was comfortable with his mother. It was the caseworker's impression that the mother was being over protective of the child since he sustained the injury.

On April 11, 2014, the child had a [REDACTED] in Crawford County, and the investigating police officer was present for this interview. The child's statement was consistent with his previous statements that he was playing catch with his father and the dog. He and the dog went for the ball at the same time, their heads collided and that was how he got hurt.

Later that day, the caseworker met with the father at his home. The father's statement was consistent with the child's statement. The caseworker saw the dog and determined that the dog's size would have led to an injury when the child and the dog collided.

On April 14, 2014, the caseworker spoke to the treating physician at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh who repeated her finding that the injury was an accidental injury.

On April 15, 2014, Crawford County Children and Youth Services submitted the Child Protective Service Investigation Report with a finding of "Unfounded".

**Current Case Status:**

The case was closed by the agency when the investigation was completed.

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

Crawford County was not required to convene a review team since the report was unfounded within thirty days of the oral report.

**Department Review of County Internal Report:**

Crawford County was not required to submit an internal report since the ChildLine investigation was unfounded within 30 days.

**Department of Human Services Findings:**

- County Strengths:

Crawford County's ChildLine investigation was able to determine rather quickly that the injury the child sustained was accidental. It was the agency's communication with the medical staff at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh that determined the injury was accidental. The agency then worked efficiently with law enforcement so that the investigation was completed within eleven days.

- County Weaknesses:

There were no County weaknesses identified.

- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance:

There were no regulatory or statutory violations.

**Department of Human Services Recommendations:**

The Department needs to review the process of decertifying near fatality reports and educating the counties on the process.