



REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:

[REDACTED]

Date of Birth: 07/30/2009
Date of Incident: 05/24/2017
Date of Report to ChildLine: 05/24/2017
CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

FAMILY KNOWN TO COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGENCY AT TIME OF INCIDENT OR WITHIN THE PRECEDING 16 MONTHS:

Crawford County Children and Youth Services
Centre County Children and Youth Services
Berks County Children and Youth Services

REPORT FINALIZED ON:
12/08/2017

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. Section 6349 (b))

Reason for Review:

Pursuant to the Child Protective Services Law, the Department, through OCYF, must conduct a review and provide a written report of all cases of suspected child abuse that result in a 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.

The Child Protective Services Law also requires that county children and youth agencies convene a review when a report of child abuse involving a fatality or near fatality is substantiated or when a status determination has not been made regarding the report within 30 days of the report to ChildLine.

Crawford County has convened a review team in accordance with the Child Protective Services Law related to this report. The county review team was convened on 06/23/2017.

Family Constellation:

<u>First and Last Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>
[REDACTED]	Victim Child	07/30/2009
[REDACTED]	Adoptive Mother	[REDACTED] 1963
[REDACTED]	Adoptive Father	[REDACTED] 1966
[REDACTED]*	Biological Mother	[REDACTED] 1975

*Denotes an individual that is not a household member or did not live in the home at the time of the incident, but is relevant to the report.

Summary of OCYF Child Near Fatality Review Activities:

The Western Region Office of Children Youth and Families (WRO) obtained and reviewed the current records provided by Crawford County Children and Youth Services (CCCYS) pertaining to the family. WRO staff reviewed various reports, assessments and case documentation provided by Crawford County.

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

On 07/31/2009, Centre County Children and Youth Services received a report with allegations the biological mother was currently incarcerated at State Correctional Institution [REDACTED] and has a history of substance abuse during her pregnancy, but identified herself as a resident of [REDACTED], Pennsylvania, in Centre County. The victim child was not showing signs of withdraw at that time. The mother developed a plan with the prison for placement of the victim child to stay with a family friend in [REDACTED].

On 09/15/2009, CCCYS received a referral requesting a courtesy home visit from Centre County Children and Youth Services. The agency was advised the victim child’s biological mother, was incarcerated at State Correctional Institution [REDACTED] and made arrangements for the victim child to reside with the adoptive family as of 09/18/2009. A courtesy home visit was completed on

09/17/2009. Community supportive services were provided to the family to assist with their care of the victim child. This report was screened out on 09/18/2009.

On 11/06/2013, Berks County Children and Youth Services (BCCYS) received a report with allegations the biological mother had given the victim child an [REDACTED] and the victim child had droopy eyes, lack of coordination and loss of balance. It was found that the biological mother was also impaired. BCCYS substantiated this report. The victim child was placed with the adoptive family while the biological mother [REDACTED]. On 12/03/2013, CCCYS received a referral requesting a courtesy visit with the victim child from BCCYS. When the mother was previously incarcerated in State Correctional Institution [REDACTED] the adoptive family had been caring for the victim child. Upon the biological mother's release from jail, she and the victim child returned to Berks County. A courtesy home visit was completed at the adoptive family's home on 12/04/2013.

On 02/20/2014, BCCYS received a report that the biological mother [REDACTED] and was going to the adoptive family's home to take the victim child.

The victim child was adopted on 12/15/2015 by the adoptive family. Prior to the birth of victim child, BCCYS has a history with the biological mother and victim child's older siblings dating back to May 1995. These incidents include documented history of substance abuse by the biological mother, a substantiated report of child abuse report in 1997 [REDACTED]

Circumstances of Child Near Fatality and Related Case Activity:

On 05/24/2017, CCCYS received a General Protective Services (GPS) referral alleging the victim child, age 7, had burns on his face, arms, chest and neck from reportedly throwing gasoline on a fire at the family's home. The family is Mennonite and has a wood burning stove located outside of the home used to heat water.

The victim child was initially taken to Meadville Medical Center and then transported by helicopter to University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC)-Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh. The victim child presented in the hospital with 3rd degree burns to 13 percent of his body, with the primary burn area being his face and chest. The victim child [REDACTED] while at Meadville Medical Center as a precautionary measure. The victim child was at Meadville Medical Center for about an hour prior to his transport to UPMC-Mercy Hospital.

CCCYS requested a courtesy visit with the victim child and his adoptive parents from Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families (ACOCYF). ACOCYF noted concerns when the adoptive mother explained that she had waited about an hour until the adoptive father came home from work to take the victim child to the emergency room, and no ambulance was called. Additionally both parents appeared to have a flat affect and did not appear to show emotion regarding the victim child's condition. On 05/25/2017, ACOCYF contacted CCCYS to make them aware of the

concerns and CCCYS upgraded the report to a Child Protective Services (CPS) report naming the adoptive mother as the alleged perpetrator of serious physical neglect from failure to provide medical treatment.

The victim child stated he threw diesel gasoline on the fire even though his adoptive mother told him to wait for her. The victim child explained he saw his adoptive father put gas on the fire in the past. The gasoline can was said to usually be kept in the shed on the side of the home, however was left by the wood burner earlier that day.

The adoptive mother explained that the victim child was outside playing while she was inside the home. She was supervising the victim child from the window and sporadically walking outside. The victim child came into the home and told her the stove needed more wood. The adoptive mother then advised the victim child she would do so shortly. The victim child came back inside the home crying and the adoptive mother saw the victim child was burned. The victim child took the gas used for the lawn mower and put it on the fire. The lawn was mowed earlier that day and the gas can was left outside. The adoptive mother put the victim child on the floor and placed wet towels on the victim child's burns. The adoptive mother then contacted the adoptive father who advised he was 25-30 minutes away from the home and would transport them to the hospital. The adoptive father arrived at the home, contacted the emergency room to make them aware he was on his way and transported the adoptive mother and the victim child to Meadville Medical Center arriving about an hour after the incident occurred.

The adoptive mother explained the family does not trust that an ambulance would be able to get to their home and get them to the hospital timely. The adoptive mother explained a situation with a neighbor who died as a result of waiting for ambulance to arrive, taking over an hour due to their rural location.

According to [REDACTED] Meadville Medical Center the wet towels placed on the victim child by the adoptive mother at the home prior to driving to the hospital neither hindered nor helped with the victim child's burns. It was also noted that a delay in medical attention in this situation could have been dangerous to the victim child's health. [REDACTED] having the victim child transported by ambulance would have assisted with pain management and monitored the victim child's airway.

According to Mennonite [REDACTED] the victim child is impulsive and has trouble waiting. They believe both parents are attentive to the victim child [REDACTED] [REDACTED] did note Mennonites have the belief that they take care of their own.

According to Crawford County Assistant District Attorney there will be no criminal charges in this case. No charges were filed against the alleged perpetrator and there is no pending criminal investigation.

Crawford County Office of Children & Youth (CCCYS) Unfounded the case on 07/21/2017. The Agency did maintain the case in intake for some time to monitor follow through with medical appointments.

Summary of County Strengths, Deficiencies and Recommendations for Change as Identified by the County's Child (Near) Fatality Report:

- Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families; Crawford County complied with all statutes and regulations during the investigation of the suspected child abuse and the collaboration/cooperation between cross systems partners was noted as thorough. Through the collaboration between the hospitals, school and child welfare, relevant information was gathered to determine safety and risk to the victim child.
- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families; There were no noted deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families, including cooperation between law enforcement and county agencies during the investigation of suspected child abuse.
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse; There was no recommendations
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies; and
- There was no recommendations
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.
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Department Review of County Internal Report:

The Western Region Office received the Crawford County Child Near-Fatality Team report. WRO finds the county's internal report as an accurate reflection of the Act 33 meeting. The report content and findings are repetitive of what was discussed during the meeting on 06/23/2017.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths:
- The Agency responded in a timely manner and requested a courtesy visit from ACOCYF.
- ACOCYF completed an assessment, was able to identify concerns with the statements provided by the caretakers, and was able to convey those concerns to CCCYS to have the initial report re-evaluated.
- Through collaboration and communication between Allegheny County and Crawford County Children Services, the county was able complete a more thorough assessment of the caretakers abilities and victim child's safety

- The Agency complied with all Investigation timelines. CCCYS investigation included interviews and visits with all parties with knowledge pertinent to the case.
- The Agency demonstrated an understanding for the Mennonite culture and made an effort to include members of the victim child's Mennonite school at the Act 33 meeting.
- County Weaknesses: and
 - The Department noted BCCYS had not provided CCCYS with any information regarding the prior Indicated report where the victim child was identified and the biological mother was the perpetrator. The Department is suggesting open communication and sharing of information/social histories between counties occur not just at times of case transfer but when requesting any assistance from another children and youth office.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency.
 - None noted

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

The Department is recommending there be regulation/law regarding safety measures while using wood burning heaters. Special effort should be made to distribute information to communities who may not use traditional means of communication such as the Mennonite/Amish communities.