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REPORT ON THE Fatality OF:

Child's Name:
Tomislav Novosel

BORN: February 4, 2009
DIED: January 21, 2011

FAMILY KNOWN TO:
Lawrence County Children and Youth Services (CYS)

REPORT FINALIZED ON:
August 19, 2011

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, 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. Lawrence County CYS convened 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>
Tomislav Novosel	victim child	2/3/1998
██████████	mother	██████████ 1970
██████████	father (not living in home)	1 ██████████ 1958
██████████	maternal grandmother	██████████ 1911

Notification of Child (Near) Fatality:

Lawrence County CYS received a ██████████ report related to the victim child's death on 1/25/2011. The Western Regional Office received notification of the child fatality on the same date from Lawrence County CYS. The ██████████ report indicated that on 1/21/2011, the police responded to a call from a neighbor because of concerns that members of the family had not been seen for a couple of days. When police entered the family home, they discovered the bodies of the child, his mother, and maternal grandmother who had been shot dead. The coroner stated the mother shot her son and mother in the head before shooting herself.

Summary of DPW Child (Near) Fatality Review Activities:

The Western Regional Office, hereafter referred to as regional office, received a copy of the initial notification of a child fatality ██████████ from Lawrence County CYS ██████████, on 1/25/2011. The report to the regional office indicated the family was not open with the agency and no other services were being provided to the family that the agency was aware of. The department attended the Lawrence County Child Fatality Review Team Meeting on February 11, 2011. It was determined, based on information presented by law enforcement, that the child and his grandmother were shot and killed by his mother, who then committed suicide by shooting herself. The police

concluded that the date of the incident was January 19, 2011, two days prior to the bodies being discovered.

The Western Regional Office of Children, Youth, and Families reviewed all current activity related to this incident as well as Lawrence County CYIS' prior history with this family.

Summary of Services to Family:

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

6/28/2006 - There was a reported incident of domestic violence between the child's parents, which coincided with a custody battle between the parents over their son. The mother also [REDACTED] towards the child by the father. Ultimately these allegations could not be substantiated. [REDACTED]

The agency did not accept the case for services.

11/27/2009 - Lawrence County CYIS received a [REDACTED] report [REDACTED] stating the mother brought her son to the emergency room [REDACTED] after returning from a visit with his father. The child received an examination at the hospital and the hospital staff determined that the child [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] The Lawrence County CYIS supervisor contacted the child's mother and advised her of the hospital's medical findings. The mother acknowledged the hospital had shared the same information with her. The agency took no further action related to this report.

Circumstances of Child Fatality and Related Case Activity:

Lawrence County CYIS was notified of the death of the child [REDACTED] on 1/25/2011. The county was informed by the New Castle Police that the death of the child was ruled a homicide/suicide; the mother having shot her son and her own mother, prior to killing herself.

The family was not open to Lawrence County CYIS at the time of the incident, and there were no other children in the family. Lawrence County CYIS [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The forensic evidence determined that the mother [REDACTED] shot the child while he was sleeping and subsequently shot and killed her mother and herself. There has been no subsequent CYIS activity as there are no other children in the family.

Current Case Status:

As stated above there is no current CYS activity as there are no other children in this family. Police have officially ruled this incident as a homicide/suicide.

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

Lawrence County CYS convened the Child Fatality Review Team Meeting in a timely manner on 2/11/2011. The review team consisted of community members in the social service as well as the criminal justice system. Those present concluded that the victim child's death was a homicide/suicide, with the mother killing her son, and then killing herself. Lawrence County CYS was not active with the family at the time of the incident. The review team found no deficiencies in services by the agency regarding this child's death and that CYS responded appropriately to the [REDACTED]. Team members had no recommendations for changes at the state and local level on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities [REDACTED]

The team did recommend that CYS and other social service agencies continue to collaborate in maintaining prevention programs and support services to at risk families, and assist local community organizations in identifying and referring at risk families.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

The Department concurred with the county's Child Fatality Review Team Report. The Department strongly agrees with the recommendation that collaboration among CYS and social service agencies should continue with a focus on maintaining prevention programs and support services to at-risk families; and assisting local community organizations in identifying and referring at risk families.

Department of Public Welfare Findings:

It is the Department's position that the county agency acted appropriately upon receiving the report of the child's death on 1/25/2011, and that the agency held the Child Fatality Review Team Meeting in a timely manner. The review team composition, consisting of community members in the social service as well as the criminal justice system was inclusive. The department concurs with the review team determination that there were no agency deficiencies related to this child's death and that CYS responded appropriately upon being notified of the fatality.

Of concern was the community's failure to recognize and/or report the significance of the issues this family was contending with prior to the tragic occurrence resulting in the child's death. It was made known during the Child Fatality Review Team Meeting that the mother had a history of physical ailments, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Information subsequently obtained through neighbors included that mother had become more [REDACTED] of the community over the past 1-2 months and that she had been barricading doors and windows in her home. There was also an incident where the child had allegedly beaten up his mother. None of this information was communicated to Lawrence County CYS prior to the child's death. Had CYS received reports pertaining to these concerns they may have been able to offer her services to mitigate some of the concerns.

Department of Public Welfare Recommendations:

The Department supports the recommendation of the county review team that collaboration among CYS and social service agencies should continue with a focus on maintaining prevention programs and support services to at-risk families; as well as assisting local community organizations in identifying and referring at risk families. The Department believes the agency and members of the review team should conduct educational meetings in the community focused on providing social service agencies, as well as the general public, with information identifying risk factors that make children as well as adults vulnerable.