



## REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:



**Date of Birth:** March 15, 2011  
**Date of Incident:** June 1, 2012  
**Date of Oral Report:** June 1, 2012

### FAMILY KNOWN TO:

Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency

### REPORT FINALIZED ON:

March 29, 2012

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. Bucks County has convened a review team in accordance with Act 33 of 2008 related to this report on June 25, 2012.

**Family Constellation:**

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth:</u>
[REDACTED]	Victim Child	03/15/2011
[REDACTED]	Mother	[REDACTED]/1988
[REDACTED]	Sister	[REDACTED]/2006
[REDACTED]	Brother	[REDACTED]/2009
[REDACTED]	Sister	[REDACTED]/2012
[REDACTED]	Maternal Grandmother	[REDACTED]/1962
[REDACTED]	Maternal Aunt	[REDACTED]/1995
[REDACTED]	Cousin	[REDACTED]/2011
[REDACTED]	Father of [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]/1994
[REDACTED]	Maternal Aunt	[REDACTED]/1993
[REDACTED]	Cousin	[REDACTED]/2011
[REDACTED]	Father of [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]/1993

**Notification of Child Near Fatality:**

On 06/01/2012 an after-hours social worker at Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency (BCCYSSA) received a telephone call [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The caller wanted to speak with a specific BCCYSSA caseworker. The caller revealed that a baby in the [REDACTED] household had just nearly drowned on 06/01/2012 around 5:00PM. Bucks County supervisor [REDACTED] made an unannounced visit to the [REDACTED] home at 6:30PM.

When [REDACTED] arrived at the home, she spoke with Middletown Township Detective [REDACTED]. The worker was told that the baby who nearly drowned is [REDACTED] who is the one year old child of [REDACTED]. The baby was in critical condition and was transferred to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). A sergeant from the

Middletown Township Police department had also called the BCCYSSA informing them of the incident at the [REDACTED] home that same day.

### **Summary of DPW Child Near Fatality Review Activities:**

The Southeast Regional office (SERO) conducted telephoned discussions with county staff regarding the victim child, his family and extended family. The SERO obtained a copy of the family's county case record for review. Interviews were conducted with Bucks County administrators and the assigned county caseworker. SERO staff participated in the Bucks County ACT 33 near fatality team review meeting on June 25, 2012.

### **Summary of Services to Family:**

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

On 10/03/2011, the county received a telephone call from the [REDACTED] regarding the child [REDACTED]. The child's father, [REDACTED], on 09/21/2011, had grabbed his son in his arms and jumped over the back fence of the residence in the pouring rain. The father had returned to the home with his child ten minutes later; no harm had come to the child. The father was charged with reckless endangerment and endangering the welfare of a child. The incident had occurred during an argument between the parents. The [REDACTED] also reported that the home was filthy and not suitable for animals or humans to live in. [REDACTED] records showed a history of involvement for the child's mother, [REDACTED], but their involvement with her was closed [REDACTED] on 01/04/2011.

An unscheduled home visit was made to the home on 10/3/2011 by a county worker. At that time, the worker assessed that the identified child was safe. The case was accepted for further evaluation and was assigned to a caseworker on 10/11/2011 in [REDACTED]. After a case review between the county supervisor and worker, the case was accepted for ongoing services on 12/03/2011. The family service plan was reviewed on 01/03/2012 for [REDACTED]. The county offered [REDACTED] a mother-baby placement program. The agency was concerned that [REDACTED] presented with dependency/ungovernable issues, and had concerns for the stability of her child. The Agency had set up many appointments for the mother to go to the program but she declined each time. The mother had even gone there for a few hours, but did not want to follow any rules, so she left.

The police had been receiving numerous telephone calls and walk-ins to their station from [REDACTED] who live near the residence at [REDACTED] Levittown, PA. The complaints covered: the residence is a crack house, teenage mothers who live there were not supervising their children when they are outside the house, the teenage mothers are selling drugs from their children's strollers, numerous people travel in and out the house at all hours of the day and night, the crime in the neighborhood has increased, and neighbors'

homes have been broken into due to the activity at that residence. On 05/22/2012 the Middletown Township Police Department had received another call about the [REDACTED] residence; this call was not related to drug activity at that location.

On 05/25/2012 the county received a hot line call regarding several teenage mothers living at the home not supervising their babies when they are outside the home. The [REDACTED] were complaining that the teenage mothers were using and selling drugs from their baby's strollers. [REDACTED] had complained that their homes were burglarized by individuals visiting [REDACTED] Levittown, PA. The police found no evidence of drug activity during their investigation, but they continued to have an interest at that location. There had been ongoing neighbors' concerns about the [REDACTED] household, up until the near drowning of [REDACTED] on 06/01/2012. The county case worker had made several announced and unannounced visits to the home between 12/07/2011 and 06/01/2012 as part of their service delivery. It should be noted that although [REDACTED] three daughters and their children lived in the home, the county was not aware of this either because the family was not forthright or because the county believed these young woman and children to simply be visiting in the home at the times they were seen. The parents were receiving parenting education, and were reported to be appropriate caretakers. It was noted by the parent educator that the household was chaotic.

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

[REDACTED] had often made complaints to the BCCYSSA office and to the Middletown Township Police Department concerning the home located at [REDACTED] Levittown, PA. Complaints included that their family home was chaotic and filthy. On 06/01/2012 several telephone calls were made to the township police department and to the BCCYSSA office concerning the family's residence. [REDACTED] had also walked into the police station to file complaints and as a result, a scheduled township meeting was planned with the township police for the neighborhood residents to discuss their concerns. Later in the day on 06/01/2012 around 6:13PM, a [REDACTED] telephoned the BCCYSSA, informing a county caseworker that a baby had just drowned at the home located at [REDACTED] Levittown PA. When the caseworker arrived at the home, she spoke with a township detective who told the worker that the baby who nearly drowned was one year old, [REDACTED], the son of [REDACTED]. The child resided with his mother and maternal grandmother along with other family and extended family members at the Levittown address. The child was found in the backyard pond by his cousin's father, [REDACTED], during the day of 06/01/2012. The child's mother and maternal grandmother were out shopping during the time of the incident. [REDACTED] stated he had gone to use the bathroom, and when he came out of the bathroom, the victim child was not present with the other children ([REDACTED] four children, and [REDACTED] daughter). It is believed by the [REDACTED] investigator that the victim child's five year old sister unlocked and opened the back door to the yard, allowing the victim child out of the house into the back yard. After [REDACTED] searched inside the house looking for the child, he

found the child in the pond. [REDACTED] performed CPR on the child and the police were called. The child was transported to St. Mary's Hospital in Langhorne Pennsylvania, and then transferred to the Philadelphia Children's Hospital.

**Current Case Status:**

The victim child, [REDACTED], and his two siblings [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were placed with their maternal great grandparents, [REDACTED]. The victim child's sister, [REDACTED], was placed with her maternal great aunt & uncle, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] continues to reside with her mother, Ms. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] son, was placed with his maternal great aunt and uncle, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] resides with her maternal great grandmother, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] voluntarily placed her one year old son, [REDACTED] at Christ's Home.

The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] because she was the caretaker for the child, and she left the home leaving the child's aunt's paramour in charge of the child knowing that he had been charged with endangering the welfare of his own child. The county [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The child's mother was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] because when she left the house, she had left the maternal grandmother in charge of the child. Law enforcement has completed their investigation and determined that no charges would be filed.

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

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. Bucks County has convened a review team in accordance with Act 33 of 2008 related to this report on June 25, 2012.

**Strengths:**

- The County has since developed a protocol that when multiple families are sharing one address that one supervisor and one manager shall be responsible for oversight. There is also a protocol that addresses assessment of all household members at the time of intake. If necessary, there will be assignment of a caseworker for each parent in the household.
- In cases with a teen parent, the agency will assign a caseworker for the teen as a mother, and another case with her as the child. These teen mothers have many needs as teens that would benefit from services by the county agency.

**Deficiencies:**

- In cases where several caseworkers are involved with a particular extended family, prior to any Agency case closure, a status meeting should be held among all caseworkers involved and an administrative review should be held prior to case closure.
- BCCYSSA has requested a data base that would allow the county to search for a client by address rather than the client name. This would allow the county to know who lives at a given address.

**Recommendations for Change at the Local Level:**

- Agency caseworkers have been instructed to inspect the entire property of a client to check for pools/ponds and to provide information to the families on how to help in keeping their families safe. The workers have been provided with handouts on pool safety.
- Nurse Family Partnership would be beneficial to support the needs of young mothers and their children.

**Recommendations for Change at the State Level:**

- Workers at both the state and local level should be aware of the existence of pools, ponds, etc. when monitoring and inspecting foster and/or family homes in order to caution families and provide information regarding pool safety.
- Overall increased attention to the needs and support of young mothers in the community should be addressed.
- The County has prepared to expand and explore continuing dialogue between police departments and child welfare agencies to increase the amount of shared information so that both entities can perform complete investigations. This case is an example of good collaboration between local police and the child welfare agency. Perhaps the state police and OCYF could partner to provide cross systems training that would improve collaboration between law enforcement and county agencies.
- The county recommended partnership with child care agencies and pool suppliers to provide pool safety education and information to families.

**Department Review of County Internal Report:**

Although the county was active with extended family members of the victim child's family, other family members in the home appeared to be in need of the county services as well, but no assessment or services were provided to them as the county was unaware

that the other family members were living in the home. The victim child's neighbors made many complaints about the living conditions at the home of the victim child, even up to and including the date of the near drowning incident of the child. The Department is in agreement with the county's need to share information with other county agencies, and the county's need to develop a data base that could locate clients by their address. This would help the county to know who lives at an actual address, and case information sharing with other caseworkers could occur more rapidly among workers and supervisors.

**Department of Public Welfare Findings:**

**County Strengths:**

- The county's willingness to enhance information sharing, and to support local agencies to improve services delivery outcomes for clients and families being served.

**County Weaknesses:**

- Warning signs from concerned neighbors in client neighborhoods should be thoroughly reviewed and investigated. Concerned neighbors made many calls to the BCCYSSA and to the area police department regarding this family household before the near drowning of the victim child.

**Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance:**

- None

**Department of Public Welfare Recommendations:**

Warning signs from concerned neighbors in client neighborhoods should be thoroughly investigated. Concerned neighbors made many calls to the BCCYSSA and to the area police department regarding this family household before, and on the date of the near drowning of the victim child. The county should address community concerns with other agencies and local law enforcement in order to provide support to the family and the community.