

Response to Citizen Review Panels' Recommendations Child Death Review Team

The Child Death Review Team provided various recommendations to the Department in the 2003 report. The team's concerns from the 2003 report were attended to, however, not in a formal response letter, but through face to face meetings.

The 2004 Child Death Review recommendations and the actions taken are listed below:

Issue 1: Not all verified child deaths reviewed

Action taken: The State Child Abuse Death Review Team made the recommendation to the Florida Legislature that the child abuse and neglect death review process should be expanded to include all verified cases of child abuse and neglect. The Legislature expended the role of the State Team to review all verified deaths effective 7/1/2004.

Issue 2: Drowning deaths

Action Taken: The Department of Children and Families requires that all foster parents who have a swimming pool attached to their home take an approved water safety course and provide assurances that their pool is fenced. New rules that will go into effect in 2005 will require all foster parents licensed by the department to take the water safety course, regardless of whether they have a pool. Emphasis on water safety and drowning prevention will be added to a revised core curriculum under development for all new Protective Investigators and counselors.

Issue 3: Case specificity/case plans

Action Taken: The Department of Children and Families is revising the core training for Protective Investigators, counselors and Supervisors and is expected to be completed revised and Implemented by July 1, 2005. The new core training will address the issue of case plans tailored for each individual child and family.

Issue 4: Training needs

Action Taken: The Department of Children and Families is revising the pre-service training to be more competency based. This curriculum should provide practical skills relating to child welfare issues and families. This training will also include components of domestic violence, critical decision making and child safety decision making as per the recommendations.

Issue 5: Facilitation of communication

Action Taken: The Department of Children and Families has committed to re-establishing the practice of regular meetings with Department of Health to discuss ongoing issues. The first such meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2005 and staff will meet no less frequently than quarterly.

Issue 6: Accessibility of criminal history

Action Taken: The department was granted National Crime Information Center (NCIC) access for limited purposes for which there is an emergency placement of children taken into custody with a relative or non-relative. The department currently employs Crime Intelligence Analysts to conduct criminal and abuse history background checks on subjects of an abuse investigation.

Issue 7: Subsidized child care

Action Taken: The department staff have worked with the staff from the Child Care Program Office to insure that we maintain the maximum number of slots available for children in foster care.

Issue 8: Protective investigations staff retention

In 2003, the legislatively mandated Protective Investigator Retention Workgroup delivered a final report. Among the recommendations included in that report were a redesign of the Child Welfare Certification training and incentives to keep Protective Investigators on the job such as payment of vehicle insurance, assistance with repayment of college loans, and a leadership program to train nominated individuals for future administrative positions. All of these recommendations have subsequently been initiated. Current data indicates statewide turnover among protective investigator staff is in decline.