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Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services Release Case Findings

The Department of Children and Family Services concluded its internal investigation of recent cases that received public attention. The investigation focused on reunification and case closures.

CCDCFS identified several factors through its internal investigation that were common threads throughout these cases. The factors were:

- In all cases the children were removed at birth or at a very young age
- Bonding and attachment issues appear to be present in all cases
- Children were under the age of six in all of the cases
- Serious mental health issues, domestic violence and or drug and alcohol issues were present
- Each family had a consistent case worker for an extensive period of time
- All of the mothers were compliant with their case plans
- All families had extensive service involvement through external providers
- All of the cases had been active at some point for two or more years with CCDCFS
- All of the mothers experienced feelings of being overwhelmed after case reunification
- Significant events occurred in the caretaker's lives after reunification and or case closure such as:
 - Loss of employment
 - Loss of housing
 - Need for immediate access to mental health services

(More)



Mission Statement
The purpose of the Department of Children and Family Services
is to assure that children at risk of abuse or neglect are protected and nurtured
within a family and with the support of the community.



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CCDCFS Case Findings

In addition to the internal review, DCFS Director Deborah Forkas appointed a Community Task Force last week to review and evaluate how children, in the custody of the Department, are reunited with their families. The Task Force is made up of professionals from the following disciplines and backgrounds: academic, medical, behavioral health (including mental health and drug and alcohol services), the justice system, domestic violence treatment and intervention and community and neighborhood service provision.

Director Forkas offered the following comments on both the internal investigation and the establishment of the Community Task Force, "All of us at the Department are deeply saddened by the recent cases of child fatality and serious injury that touched children and families that had some history with DCFS. Despite the dedication and best efforts by supervisors and caseworkers these events occurred. We are determined that we will learn from these cases to improve our practice and our partnerships to do our best to protect the children who come into our care."

Referring to the work of the Task Force over the next 90 days, Director Forkas added, "Through the work of the Task Force, we are committed to evaluating our reunification process and service delivery model to continue to improve our decision-making process."

The Department has commenced a review of all open cases and of all child reunifications from January 2009 through the present. "We will continue to transform our system to better protect children, support families and to provide the community with greater accountability," Forkas concluded.

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