



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

REPORT ON THE FATALITY OF:

HOPE DELOZIER

Date of Birth: 09.19.13
Date of Death: 03.23.15
Date of Report to ChildLine: 03.24.15
CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

**FAMILY NOT KNOWN TO COUNTY CHILD WELFARE AT TIME OF INCIDENT
OR WITHIN THE PRECEDING 16 MONTHS:**

**Bradford County Children and Youth Services
And
Wyoming County Human Services**

**REPORT FINALIZED ON:
9/17/15**

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:

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, 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.

Act 33 of 2008 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. Bradford County has convened a review team in accordance with Act 33 of 2008 related to this report. The county review team was convened on April 23, 2015.

Family Constellation:

<u>First and Last Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>
Hope Delozier	Child/Victim	09.19.13
[REDACTED]	Sibling of C/V	[REDACTED].11
[REDACTED]	Sibling of C/V	[REDACTED].10
[REDACTED]	Biological Mother of C/V	[REDACTED].81
[REDACTED]	Biological Father of C/V	[REDACTED].85

Summary of OCYF Child Fatality Review Activities:

OCYF/NERO program representative commenced review of fatality of Hope Delozier on March 26, 2015 by means of site visit and preliminary review of current investigation status. Initial case notes and medical information reviewed. Additionally, OCYF/NERO interviewed assigned CPS caseworker and supervisory personnel. Bradford County Children and Youth Services' safety assessment and case planning discussed at this time.

On April 1, 2015 OCYF/NERO conducted site visit to county agency and secured status update on Hope Delozier Fatality. Case progression discussed with CPS supervisory personnel. Results of autopsy reviewed and current status of criminal investigation discussed. Copy of agency case file secured at this time.

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

There was no record of service activity or involvement of the [REDACTED] family in Bradford County prior to the fatality.

Circumstances of Child Fatality and Related Case Activity:

Bradford County Children and Youth Services commenced a [REDACTED] investigation relating to the circumstances surrounding the death of Hope Delozier on March 23, 2015. Specifically, the Child/Victim was transported to the Towanda Memorial Hospital by the biological parents where she was pronounced dead following an attempt by [REDACTED] staff to resuscitate. It was determined that the Child/Victim suffered from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] derived from an untreated ear infection of the left ear that migrated [REDACTED]. Information provided by the biological parents acknowledged that the onset of the Child/Victim's ear infection occurred approximately three weeks prior. Biological parents of Child/Victim indicated that they espoused a strong belief in homeopathic medicine and therefore did not believe that use of antibiotics was necessary.

During the course of the county agency's investigation, a safety plan was established regarding the siblings of the Child/Victim. Prior to the provision of services to the siblings of Child/Victim, Bradford County Children and Youth supervisory and casework personnel reviewed the case with the agency [REDACTED]. As part of this case plan review, agency personnel were afforded the opportunity to meet with the siblings of Child/Victim and parents at their place of residence on both an announced and unannounced basis. Additionally, the family's pastor and his wife were assisting the family in various child care/household needs. The family's pastor had agreed to allow the family to maintain their house trailer on parish property. The family currently resides in the [REDACTED] area.

Bradford County Child and Youth Services has been providing [REDACTED] services to this family immediately upon notification of the [REDACTED] relating to the Child/Victim. These services have been directed towards the two surviving siblings of the Child/Victim. [REDACTED] complete physical examinations of both children by licensed medical providers. The safety plan developed with this family included assurances from the biological parents and the local minister assisting the family that any future medical needs for the surviving siblings of the Child/Victim would be attended to through conventional medical practices. The county agency has also maintained announced and unannounced contact with this family to ensure that the overall health of siblings of Child/Victim is maintained. The family has been cooperative with the agency assessment, interventions [REDACTED]

The county agency initially submitted [REDACTED] on the case as the Bradford County Coroner's Office and medical personnel were still assessing all relevant medical test data relating to the Child/Victim's death.

On June 10, 2015 the Pennsylvania State Police/[REDACTED] Barracks filed criminal charges against both the biological mother and biological father in the death of Hope Delozier. The biological mother of the Child/Victim was charged with one count of Involuntary Manslaughter (F2) and one count of Endangering the Welfare of Children/Parent/Guardian/Other Commits Offense (F3). Biological father of Child/Victim was similarly charged with one count of Involuntary Manslaughter (F2) and one count of Endangering the Welfare of Children/Parent/Guardian/Other Commits Offense (F3). The biological mother was released following arraignment. However, the biological father was remanded to the [REDACTED] Jail due to the existence of an outstanding warrant from another jurisdiction.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During the Act 33 Meeting, discussion was held regarding the safety of the surviving siblings. Bradford County felt that the children were safe based on the co-operation of the family in allowing agency access to the children as well as allowing services to be provided in the home.

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

Strengths

- Bradford County Children and Youth Services commenced a timely investigation following timeframes established under CPSL.
- Agency case file evidences a thorough investigation utilizing corroborative medical data and evidence of collaborative investigative efforts with the law enforcement agency.
- The Act 33 case review involved a broad range of participants representing the various social service providers and investigative agencies within the county. The review was conducted in a manner that was open and collegial with all participants sharing information.

Deficiencies

- OCYF/NERO received Bradford County Children and Youth Services' Child Death Review on July 17, 2015. Upon review of the Child Death Review, OCYF/NERO determined that there were no deficiencies relating to the investigative process of this fatality.

Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse.

- None

Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies.

- None

Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.

- Given the unique nature of the circumstances surrounding the precursors and sequelae of the fatality, a number of issues were raised during the Fatality Review relating to the extent to which the religious beliefs of the parents contributed to this child's fatality. While the long range discussions and implications of the family's religious ideologies are outside of the purview of the Department of Human Services, it would certainly behoove community providers to understand the nuances of various religious sects and the impact some of these ideologies have on basic child care. A recommendation is therefore made to afford the county agency as well as other social service agencies an opportunity to increase their awareness of these matters. Consideration should be given to securing training opportunities that would specifically focus on the interplay between personal religious beliefs and parental responsibilities to render essential medical care to their children. An in-service training for casework staff relating to these issues should be considered.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

Bradford County Children and Youth Services conducted a full child death review on Hope Elizabeth Delozier on April 23, 2015. The agency documentation of this review was completed on July 17, 2015. OCYF/NERO review of the agency's submission has determined that the Child Death Review was accurate and reflective of the information provided during the review.

OCYF/NERO accepts the Child Death Review as it has been submitted in its entirety.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths: Bradford County Children and Youth Services conducted a thorough and timely investigation into a fatality that was complex and fraught with complex issues associated with parental religious belief and the right to practice these beliefs. The agency case file contained evidence of review of the specific religious tenets associated with this family and their applicability to the investigative process. There is documentary data contained in the case file to demonstrate that an extensive discussion occurred between the law enforcement agency and the county child welfare

agency relating to the criminal implications of withholding medical care from children under the guise of parental religious freedoms.

- County Weaknesses: OCYF/NERO has determined there were no weaknesses in either of the investigative process or case documentation.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency. There were no statutory or regulatory violations associated with this case.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, recommends that Bradford County Children and Youth Services continue to engender a collegial relationship with the investigative law enforcement agencies. The case history documented within this case demonstrates consistent collaboration and information sharing not often found between the public child welfare agency and the law enforcement community. It is recommended that this relationship continue.

The agency's current pattern of case documentation of Child Protective Service investigations is also thorough and timely. OCYF/NERO recommends that this process be continued.

The Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families recommends that the county's recommendation be further explored at a state level to secure training and/or resources to focus on parental religious beliefs, that may or may not be the result of an established religion, and parental responsibilities to secure medical care.