



**TEXAS**  
Department of Family  
and Protective Services

# **2016-2017 Citizen Review Team Report**

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May 1, 2018

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## Region 3

### Case Issue

A case involving neglectful supervision, substance abuse by an adult caretaker, and a car accident resulting in life-threatening injuries.

### Recommendations

- The team thought that CPS staff did not take the caregiver's criminal or CPS history in consideration when assessing risk or appropriate services for the family.
- Staff needs training on how to work with family members on sensitive cases so they can get the necessary information, but also show compassion.
- Staff need to check their biases, avoid appearing judgmental and understand that family members are also affected by drug use.
- CPS staff need more information about and understanding of protective orders.
- The team thought that high caseloads and lack of time for the caseworkers was a barrier in this case.

### CPS Response

- CPS offers Drug Use 101, an online training for staff that address a variety of topics including drug testing and a general understanding of substance use. This training includes information that drug use does not equal addiction or dependence. Staff are encouraged to treat every case individually in order to address a particular family's strengths and needs. The CPS Practice Model promotes the need to set aside biases and find the individual strengths and needs of each family unit and work to empower the family to find the best way to address the issues. The CPS Practice Model can be found here: [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Transformation/documents/Practice\\_Model\\_Children\\_First.pdf](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Transformation/documents/Practice_Model_Children_First.pdf)

In January 2018 The Substance Use Practice Guide was published to assist staff working with families impacted by substance use issues and it is aligned with the CPS Practice Model. The Substance Use Practice Guide can be found here:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource\\_Guides/Substance\\_Use\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Substance_Use_Resource_Guide.pdf)

- CPS staff are informed about the type of circumstances when a protective order might be appropriate. Discussion with the county attorney, district attorney or DFPS regional attorney take place before any steps are taken in a specific case.
- The Practice Guide for CPS Attorneys is an online guide with many useful resources. The Guide was updated in 2016 and is available at [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/CPS\\_Attorneys](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/CPS_Attorneys)

## Region 4

### Case Issue

A case that involved a fatality of one child and near-fatality of another in the same incident.

### Recommendations

- The team determined that the main barriers in this case were the need for better communication between CPS and the Texas Rangers and the need for more training on child abuse for local law enforcement. The team recommended that the training could be coordinated with the Child Advocacy Center's Multi-disciplinary Team.
- In cases involving a fatality and such serious injury to a child the CPS staff may require increased emotional support. The team expressed concern that with some CPS units being short-staff this could be difficult.

### CPS Response

- Advanced Child Abuse Investigation Joint Training is a certification requirement for senior advanced specialist investigation caseworkers. The training is conducted by Texas Municipal Police Association (TMPA) and is a joint training. DFPS caseworkers may also participate in multi-disciplinary training with the Child Advocacy Center in their area.
- The DFPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers services to assist employees with emotional and behavioral problems. Treatment is confidential, and assessment, crisis intervention, and short-term counseling are free of charge. The EAP can be called on to offer critical incident debriefing when needed.

## Region 8

### Case Issue

A case involving a child who was unrestrained in a vehicle and was injured when the vehicle crashed.

### Recommendations

- The team felt that insufficient attention was given to the adult's previous CPS history and that the previous case was not well assessed for domestic violence or substance abuse.
- Although the team noted that there was not "much the Department could have done to have anticipated or prevented the accident", they were concerned that in neither CPS case involving this family was there any discussion of the proper use of car seats in the vehicle.
- More follow-up was needed on alcohol assessment given to adult caretaker.

### CPS Response

- CPS history is considered as part of the risk assessment completed during an Investigation. This includes any history of the parents being victims of abuse as children. The Structured

Decision Making (SDM) Manual is available here:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource\\_Guides/SDM\\_Safety\\_Assessment\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/SDM_Safety_Assessment_Manual.pdf) (See page 42-43 of the manual.)

- Families are expected to be familiar with laws regarding car seats and restraints. CPS does not investigate cases of children being unrestrained in a vehicle unless there are other factors indicative of abuse or neglect

## Region 10

### Case Issue

A case where a child suffered a subdural acute hematoma due to physical abuse

### Recommendations

- The team determined that the assessment of risk and safety was an issue because the amount of time between home visits by CPS caseworkers was too long.
- More communication was needed between the CPS staff, the doctors, and hospital.
- One practice issue was that an ECI referral was not done timely and the protocols for making the referral was not followed.

### CPS Response

- Subsequent to this case review policy regarding the Forensic Assessment Center Network (FACN) has been revised. The FACN is comprised of physicians who specialize in child abuse and neglect. They bring a set of knowledge and skills that is critical to the CPS process. They provide case consultation, including medical evaluations, expert witness testimony for court proceedings, and training to DFPS.
- Additions to the FACN policy address:
  - the function of the FACN;
  - when and how to make a referral to the FACN;
  - documenting result from FACN consultation;
  - how to request an extension while waiting for a response from the FACN.
- Training on the FACN accompanies the policy revision and the FACN resource guide was updated in February 2018.  
[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_2120.asp#CPS\\_2137](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_2120.asp#CPS_2137)
- Since 2017 the Child Protection app has been available for caseworkers to download to their DFPS-provided iPhones. The app assists CPS, law enforcement and medical personnel when evaluating children who may have been abused.

### Case Issue

A case where a child tested positive for amphetamines, showing numerous symptoms in the emergency room.

## **Recommendations**

- The committee thought this was one of the best case records they have reviewed. “The case was well done, everyone was informed and they communicated well.” The case was well documented, time frames were followed, and staff did a good job assessing for safety and finding a relative who could provide a safe environment.

## **CPS Response**

- No Recommendations.

## **Case Issue**

A case where an infant was severely physically abused causing brain damage, fractures and brain bleeds.

## **Recommendations**

- The team thought the case was worked well and tasks were completed very timely. CPS staff did a good job engaging the non-offending parent and the communication with medical personnel and law enforcement was good. The supervisor guided the case well. Documentation was clear.

## **CPS Response**

- No Recommendations.

## **Case Issue**

A case involving failure to thrive and severe malnourishment.

## **Recommendations**

- Overall, the caseworker and supervisor did an outstanding job. Documentation was clear, timely and detailed, good communication with medical staff and law enforcement, appropriate services were offered and parent was engaged.
- The team expressed concern that the hospital did not follow mandated reporting requirements as they did not report to CPS when the child tested positive for drug at birth. This was a missed opportunity for CPS to work with the family prior to this incident.

## **CPS Response**

- No Recommendations.

## Region 11

### Case Issue

A case that involved a new-born who nearly died due to pregnancy complications that may have been related to drug abuse.

### Recommendations

- The staff met time frames, implemented safety interventions. Concerns that warranted services were identified and the family was referred the family to Family Based Safety Services in a timely manner.
- The team expressed concern that the staff did not speak directly with the physician and all of the medical information came from a nurse. Medical professionals on the Citizen Review Team (CRT) noted that upon admission to the ER blood work did not test positive for the drugs allegedly taken and that the pregnancy complication could have occurred naturally. This is a concern because allegedly drug use was a determining factor in the disposition and severity rating given in this case.
- The team requested that CPS staff review this case with the CPS regional nurse and CPS drug specialist regarding the lack of a positive drug screen. The team stated that the case may need to be re-opened and the case disposition reviewed.

### CPS Response

- Refer back to the region for review.