



201 East Washington Avenue, Room E200
P.O. Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916
Telephone: 608-266-8787
Fax: 608-266-5547

Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Division of Safety and Permanence

May 21, 2015

Curtis Emerson, Program Coordinator
Polk County Citizen Review Panel
Northwest Journey-Siren
P O Box 388
Siren, WI 54872

Dear Mr. Emerson:

Thank you for your timely submission of the 2014 Polk County Citizen Review Panel report. This letter responds to the citizen review panel annual report requirement in the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

The citizen review panel submitted one recommendation to improve child protection services at the state level. A brief summarized statement of this recommendation and the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) response follows:

The panel recommends that the issue of the use of cameras by child protective services workers be examined for possible change.

As you are aware, the child protective services (CPS) worker's primary role is to complete a comprehensive assessment of the family to inform child safety decision making and planning. The Department of Children and Families does not advise CPS workers to wear cameras or to take pictures as part of their responsibilities to conduct a comprehensive assessment of screened in CPS reports. The Department advises the use of teaming with law enforcement and public safety officials such as building inspectors, etc. when there are allegations that indicate injuries or unsafe living conditions. The use of photography or videotaping to document case details is incident focused and suggests a process of gathering evidence, which is more clearly within the role of a law enforcement officer or public health official. Also, the ability of a CPS worker to gather information about the family and child depends significantly upon meaningful family engagement. The use of cameras may undermine the family's willingness to engage and be forthcoming with the CPS worker regarding sensitive topics.

Additionally, CPS workers are to follow all related Federal and State requirements regarding confidentiality of records. The use of continuous and ongoing recording devices presents a multitude of confidentiality challenges. For example, constant recording may present challenges in segregating the information from one case to another. Another concerning issue involves storage, redaction and release of information.

I hope that your first year as a Wisconsin citizen review panel was productive and that you continue to make progress in 2015. Thank you for your dedication and efforts on behalf of Wisconsin children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fredi-Ellen Bove".

Fredi-Ellen Bove
Division Administrator