



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor


Mike Carroll  
Interim Secretary

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DATE: May 22, 2014

TO: Regional Managing Directors, Family and Community Services Directors and Regional Child Fatality Prevention Specialists

CC: Deputy Secretary Pete Digre, Assistant Secretary for Programs Janice Thomas and Statewide Fatality Prevention Specialist Lisa Rivera

FROM: Interim Secretary Mike Carroll 

SUBJECT: Transparency and Consistency in Incident Reporting

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Incident reporting related to child fatalities requires a balanced approach that ensures timely and accurate communication to department leadership and the public while complying with applicable confidentiality laws. Our practices in this area have often been inconsistent and have led to a lack of trust and confidence in the department.

It is my aim to increase transparency by providing the public with unprecedented access to information following child fatalities. To that end, please find attached a new incident reporting policy. The new policy seeks to ensure that we follow the law while providing as much transparency as possible. I would like to stress a few key components:

- **Single point of contact.** Each region will have a single point of contact for incident reporting. This will ensure consistency and Lisa Rivera, the Statewide Fatality Prevention Specialist, will be providing training for these individuals in the coming weeks.
- **No copying and pasting from FSFN.** To comply with the law and ensure the public and media are able to gain insight into these incidents, information must be summarized and not taken directly from FSFN. This is not in an effort to shield disclosure but quite the opposite. In order to legally release information, it must not be a direct transcription of the abuse report but rather a summary of the case that will allow us to legally provide transparency into the case and prior involvement.
- **Investigation and case work are to be done solely in FSFN.** In order to comply with federal Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System guidelines, all investigations must be documented in a single source—FSFN. The incident report is a summary of what is known at the time of the completion of the report. Any updates or additional information must be documented in FSFN.

Following this new policy will enable the department to provide more information to the public than we have in the past. It is my firm belief that, as communities become more aware of the issues facing children and struggling families, they will be motivated to join us in our efforts to prevent tragedies from occurring.

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