



Michigan Supreme Court

State Court Administrative Office

Family Services

Child Welfare Services

Michigan Hall of Justice

P.O. Box 30048

Lansing, Michigan 48909

Phone (517) 373-1956

Daniel J. Wright
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 26, 2008

TO: Family Division Judges

cc: Chief Circuit Judges
Circuit Court Administrators
Family Division Administrators

FROM: Daniel J. Wright

RE: Court Child Death Review Committee
Reporting Child Deaths

The federal government has established the Court Improvement Program (CIP) to initiate changes that will augment the ability of state courts to provide safety, timely permanent placements, and well-being for children in foster care.

As part of its CIP-related efforts, the SCAO Child Welfare Services Division has created a committee to review cases in which a child has died while under a Michigan court's jurisdiction for child abuse and neglect. The purpose of the court child death review committee is to review the case to determine whether a change in court rules or practice could have helped to prevent the circumstances that brought about the death of that child.

The committee will work in tandem with the state child death review team's Citizen Review Panel (CRP). The CRP reviews child death cases in which the family had child protective services involvement. The CRP's primary focus is to evaluate the extent to which the department of human services is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities. The SCAO court child death review committee will focus on court improvement.

Individuals involved with the committee also will offer educational opportunities for judges and lawyers, if appropriate, based on the information obtained in the reviews. All such child death cases will be reviewed, regardless of whether the child's death was the result of an intentional act, an accident, or a natural cause.

To facilitate this project, we are asking each court to report to SCAO when a child has died while under court jurisdiction for child abuse and neglect. This reporting requirement does not apply to juvenile delinquency cases. A copy of the report form is attached.

Upon receiving a report that a child has died, SCAO will request additional information from the court to allow the court child death review committee to conduct its examination of the case. The review committee is chaired by retired 4th Circuit Family Division Judge Susan Vandercook. The other members of the review team are: Lindsay Gross, State Child Death Review Team; Steve Flood, Berrien County Referee; Kelly Howard, CIP Manager – SCAO; Jenifer Pettibone, Management Analyst-SCAO; Rebekah Visconti, Division Chief-Attorney General Children and Youth Services Division; Zoe Lyons, Acting Director DHS Office of Family Advocate, and Steve Yager, Director of Clinton/Gratiot DHS.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information or clarification regarding this memorandum, please contact Kelly Howard at howardk@courts.mi.gov or (517) 373-8671; or Jenifer Pettibone at pettibonej@courts.mi.gov or (517) 373-9574. Thank you for your cooperation

Approved, SCAO

REPORT OF CHILD DEATHS WHILE UNDER COURT JURISDICTION (CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT)

Please submit this report to Kelly Howard by fax to 517-373-8922 or by mail to the State Court Administrative Office, Child Welfare Services, PO Box 30048, Lansing, Michigan 48909.

Court Number and Designation	County
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Child's name	Date of birth	Date of death	Cause of death (if known)	NA case number	Other case numbers for cases involving same child (domestic relations, guardianship, etc.)

Date prepared	Preparer's name and telephone number	Signature of chief judge
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Additional instructions: This report is completed only when a child dies while under the jurisdiction of the court in a child protective proceeding (NA case-type – neglect or abuse). If it is known that a child was under the jurisdiction of a court of another county at the time of death, include the name of that county under the column "Other case numbers for cases involving same child." Otherwise, it is presumed that any case number reported in this column is for the reporting county.