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Subject: DSS Issue

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Good Afternoon Madame Chair,

Thank you for talking with me earlier about these issues. As I explained we have received three separate accounts of cases where a foster parent or family member is very concerned about the placement of a child. All three include allegations of sexual abuse to some extent and if the information we have is accurate, what appears to be instances where these allegations were not fully investigate or handled appropriately. In the case of the Hammonds family, there seems to be less concern that they will be placed with the alleged sexual abuser but that their placement will be with family that has generally abused them. I understand that in order for DSS to protect children from these homes long term they need evidence, however I am concerned that in spite of the allegations of horrendous acts against children DSS is still failing to fully investigate the situations and therefore failing to protect the children involved. Please see the brief summaries below provided by my staff:

Case #1: Arianna DeRosia (Child) - Jessica Cord (Foster Parent)

Arianna has displayed behaviors indicative of sexual abuse and these have been reported to DSS by foster parents, it is our offices understanding that DSS has not taken steps to investigate these claims. The biological father has a conviction for Cruelty to Children in Cherokee County on 9/22/2017 and yet the impression that the foster parents have had is that Arianna could be returned to a home with this man.

Case #2: Isabelle Dunn (18 Months old) - Ashley Dill (Foster Parent)

Isabelle Dunn is an 18 month old child in the care of Ashley Dunn and her husband for the last 12 months (They are in the process of taking necessary steps to adopt Isabelle). Isabelle has four sisters. The two oldest girls are in a community home. Of the two oldest girls the 12 year old (11 at time of removal) has made allegations that Cory Dunn (Father/StepFather) sexually abused her. The other of the oldest girls has said things to Ashley Dill that raise concerns that she has also been abused. Cory Dunn has a conviction for 4 counts of unlawful neglect of child on 5/21/2013 in Spartanburg County. Ashley Dill raised a few concerns: 1) The parents of the 5 girls are trying to get DSS to give them to a foster family that they are friends with in Delaware and the Mother of the girls has said to Ashley that they will just move to Delaware and get to spend time with the girls (DSS has expressed that they are not in favor of the girls going to Delaware and there is an upcoming hearing), 2) the parents are not allowed to see the two older girls at all but are allowed to see the three younger girls, including Isabelle (the absurdity of this situation was put into shocking terms by the second oldest (10 years old) of the 5 girls who asked Ashley why the younger girls could see their parents and the older girls could not, the 10 year old then said the older girls could tell Dad (Cory) no but the younger girls could not.), and 3) She is concerned by the Sheriff Departments failure to pursue an investigation against Cory. On the investigation, I understand that solicitors have the discretion about which cases to pursue, however Ms. Dill has been told by the investigator that they are not pursuing Cory because there are also allegations against a Karate Teacher and he is the big fish, and that if the case against Cory failed it would hurt the case against the Karate Teacher. Further, surely the criminal investigation and the DSS investigations can work together but it appears they are not.

Case #3: Shilo and Heaven Hammonds - Rebecca Cuevas (Grandmother in Texas) - Marlboro County

It is our understanding that DSS wants to place each girl with their father or their father's family. According to Rebecca Shilo's father's family has already abused her and Heaven's father denies he is her father and wants nothing to do with her. As of last night the girls were apparently removed from Shilo's Father's family again. In addition, to those concerns one of the girls has allegedly been sexually abused by the Mother's (Latosha Hammonds) Boyfriend's brother and Latosha was the one who dropped the child off at his house. The girls have been staying with Rebecca's cousin Carol Jordan and Rebecca would like to take the girls. When she came to South Carolina last month to see the girls she also tried to talk to the DSS caseworker about the situation which was apparently met with hostility. This is

situation seems less straight forward then the others and likely involves instances where DSS cannot reveal information to some of the people involved. However, this again appears to be a situation where DSS is not fully investigating or if they are they are not acting on their findings. Rebecca's concerns are the children will be placed with Shilo's Father's Family who have already abused her or with their mother.

These children need to be protected as do all the others in our state. I recognize that there are laws and procedures that need to be followed, however the overall theme of these cases seems to be that DSS is under-investigating and therefore not protecting these children.

Bests, Kevin