



RICHLAND COUNTY COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

J. Paige Greene – Executive Director

20 March 2014

The Honorable Governor Nikki Haley
Office of the Governor, 1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

I write this letter to you resounding concerns for the safety of victims of child abuse and neglect who are under the protective watch of South Carolina Department of Social Services. In July 2013, following the death of four year old Robert Guinyard, I wrote to you requesting an urgent 'call to action' for reform within the Child Protection System. Unfortunately, that has not happened and more children under the state's watch have died and/or been re-abused since that time.

As you are aware, many child advocates and professionals throughout South Carolina have expressed their concern over the current policies and practices at the Department of Social Services. Through the various testimonies, sufficient facts have been presented that reflects grave discrepancies in the actual casework being performed from that which is presented by the Executive Branch of SCDSS. I have personally reached out to Lillian Koller pleading for her to cease the practice of Community Based Prevention Services and can provide multiple examples of casework decisions that are in extreme contrast to what Ms. Koller and her staff relate as the 'policy'.

In fact, this letter comes to you on the heels of receiving yet another child in the system where an inappropriate referral was made and the child was left to suffer more abuse. We have been told repeatedly that the cases that SCDSS refers to CBPS are ONLY cases that do not rise to the level of DSS investigation. However, this elementary aged child was brought into foster care in 2011 for sexual abuse by relatives. She was returned to her custodians when the perpetrators moved out of the home. The case closed in 2012 ordering that the custodians not allow the perpetrators to have any contact with this young child. In February 2013, DSS received another report that one of the perpetrators was living in the home again and that the child had bruising on her face. That referral was never investigated. It was referred to CBPS, who sent it back to DSS. DSS still never investigated the allegations. Now, this lovely young elementary aged child is back in foster care after telling school officials of the on-going sexual abuse by the same perpetrator. Thankfully Richland County Sherriff's Department was able to step in and offer this child protection where DSS failed.

As evidenced through credible testimony, the problems within the SCDSS organization are vast and will take swift, competent action to repair. However, we simply cannot stand by and wait for improvements to be made while our children remain at risk. I am now pleading with you to issue an order to SCDSS to cease the use of Community Based Prevention Services prior to a thorough Child Protective Services Investigation being conducted and that child abuse / neglect has been ruled out. Further, I am pleading for you to order that all cases referred to CBPS rather than being investigated, be reviewed immediately. Despite continued assurances that intake processes have changed, we are still seeing the residual effects of the referrals to CBPS.

Respectfully,


J. Paige Greene
Executive Director

**cc: Lillian Kohler, SC DSS Director
Richland County Delegation
Lexington County Delegation
Richland County Administration
Richland County Council**