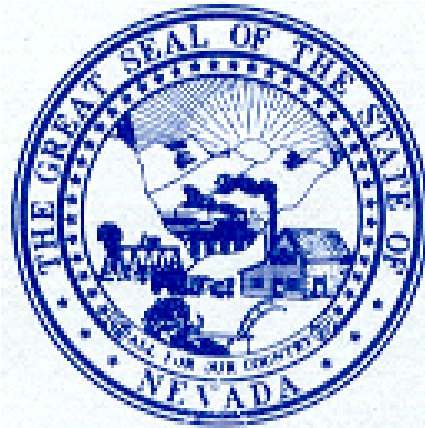


Case Review of the
53 Cases in Clark County
Identified by Ed Cotton's Report



Review Completed by
State of Nevada
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Child and Family Services
Family Programs Office

April 27, 2007

Introduction

In the spring of 2006, the Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS) commissioned independent consultant Ed Cotton to review and assess 1,352 open child abuse and neglect cases involving at least one child under the age of 6. Clark County officials were concerned the department had no internal protocols or processes for conducting comprehensive administrative reviews of child welfare services cases. County management recognized that an internal case review process is an essential part of a well-functioning child welfare system and hired Cotton to conduct the review to include both intact family and out-of-home placement cases. At the conclusion of the review, Cotton was asked to compile his findings in a report to be released to the public.

Included in Cotton's report was an eight-page addendum which contained 53 cases where the safety of a child under protection may have been jeopardized. In February 2007, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Mike Willden and Clark County Commission Chairman Rory Reid asked each of their staffs to conduct reviews to better assure the community that children mentioned in the document were having all their needs met.

The Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) conducted a review of the 53 cases in question, which was completed on March 12, 2007. The review was completed based on information found in Nevada's child welfare case management system, UNITY. From March 12, 2007 to April 16, 2007, CCDFS worked on 8 cases identified by the review team as needing more follow up and/or more information entered into the UNITY system. The findings of the review are as follows:

Review Findings

Case	Findings	Follow-up Required
1321170	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY.• No additional action by Clark County was necessary.	No
1304262	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After review of the case documentation in the UNITY system it was determined an assessment of safety is needed immediately.• CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the children.• After additional documentation in the UNITY system, it was found that Clark County had taken necessary	Yes Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services

	steps to ensure safety of the children.	
1326644	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The case remains open. The child is placed with relatives who are working towards obtaining guardianship. 	No
1323512	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the family is being seen regularly by CCDFS and the mother is participating in drug court. 	No
1281666	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The case remains open. The child is placed with relatives who are working toward obtaining guardianship. 	No
1308387	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the children are safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary the children appear safe in their new adoptive home. 	No
1313583	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After review of the case documentation in the UNITY system it was determined an assessment of safety is needed immediately. Unable to determine the safety of this child based on the information in UNITY. 	Yes Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the child. • Required documentation between Clark County and DCFS central office prior to this child being placed out of state had not occurred. Nor had the documentation in the UNITY system been entered timely and completely. Clark County had received a quarterly report from the California worker who is currently providing supervision of the child and stated the child is currently doing well in his placement with his aunt and she is moving forward towards adoption. 	
1272557	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the child appears safe in a new adoptive home. 	No
1271837	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No
1312676	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the child appears safe in a new adoptive home. 	No
1270297	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the children are safe in an out of home placement while the family continues to receive services. 	No
1313600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No

1308564	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the children are safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the children are safe in a relative placement while the family continues to receive services. 	No
1323603	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the children are safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the children appear to be safe at a relative's home and ongoing services are being provided by CCDFS. 	No
1325802	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the parents completed their case plan and the court agreed the case should be closed. 	No
1324796	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because family was receiving services from CCDFS until January 2007 when the court agreed the case should be closed 	No
1314026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the parents completed their case plan and the court agreed the case should be closed. 	No
1271434	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the parents completed their case plan and the 	No

	court agreed the case should be closed.	
1271915	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to determine the safety of this child based on the information in UNITY. • CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the child. • Documentation in the UNITY system was not complete. There was an investigation that was completed jointly between CCDFS and Metro that had not been documented appropriately in UNITY. Clark County has updated the documentation on this case. The court found the child to be safe and ordered the Clark County's custody of the child to be terminated. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services</p>
1262625	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the parent completed the case plan and in August 2006 the court agreed the case should be closed. 	No
1323413	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No
1315186	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. 	No

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	
1276032	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the court ordered the case closed. 	No
1269113	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No
1279585	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No
1322867	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No
1324448	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary. CCDFS is currently providing services to this family and the case is progressing toward relative guardianship. 	No
1322287	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was 	No

	<p>conducted to determine the children are safe and a safety plan was not needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the family moved to California and jurisdiction over the children has been transferred to, and accepted by, the California Court. 	
1274872	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the children are safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary because although placement history and formal safety assessment are not documented in the UNITY system, there are case notes indicating the children were informally assessed for safety in the home of their mother, aunt and an emergency care provider. 	No
1280421	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary because there is documentation in the UNITY system of safety assessments completed throughout the life of this case. (The last safety assessment was completed at the time of case closure indicating at that point the children were safe living with their mother.) 	No
1313324	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. 	No
1297478	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to determine the safety of these children based on the information in UNITY. CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the children. A new safety assessment was entered into UNITY indicating the children in this case have been found to be safe. In this case the court also felt the children were safe and dismissed custody. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services</p>

1316722	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not well documented in UNITY, although reviewer was able to read the DCFS Central Office file and found progress reports on this case. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because although not well documented in the UNITY record, it appears that ICPC supervision and reporting occurred. Despite the child only being supervised in the mother's care for four months (instead of the standard six), California was in agreement with case closure. 	No
1319284	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because although the parents were inconsistent with drug treatment and relapsed at times, it was determined through frequent face-to-face contact that the children were well cared for and not abused or neglected. CCDFS continues to offer services and monitor the family with drug testing. 	No
1320652	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the child is now placed out of state with a relative and is being supervised through ICPC. The case is progressing toward a relative adoption. 	No
1305506	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the child is now safe in a court ordered guardianship. 	No
1320788	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. 	No

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The child has been placed with relatives and is being visited by CCDFS staff. This case is still being served by CCDFS and progressing toward relative adoption. 	
1271428	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The case is still open and the family is receiving services from CCDFS. 	No
1303396	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The child is currently placed in foster care and regular visits with CCDFS staff have been occurring. 	No
1312235	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The child has been placed with a relative guardian. 	No
1263632	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY do not indicate an assessment was conducted to determine the child is safe. An assessment of safety is needed immediately. CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the child. CCDFS entered a new safety assessment into UNITY indicating the children in this case have been found to be safe. 	Yes Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services
1292144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The parental rights for the children in question were 	No

	<p>terminated in October 2005; eleven months prior to the Ed Cotton case review. The decision to reunify the child born in 2006 with the birth parents would not have affected or influenced the TPR proceedings.</p>	
1275076	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the case was closed after the court ordered guardianship. 	No
1326819	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the case is currently open and CCDFS is regularly visiting the child to assure safety. 	No
1320226	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the case is currently open and CCDFS is regularly visiting the child to assure safety. 	No
1325995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the children are currently placed with appropriate relatives who are in the process of obtaining legal guardianship. 	No
1306012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to determine the safety of this child based on the information in UNITY. • CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the child. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Completed by Clark County Department</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reviewer was concerned about these children possibly having unsupervised visits with their father. More documentation was entered into UNITY stating the children only have supervised visits with their father at this time. 	of Family Services
1326584	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing notes in UNITY do not indicate an assessment was conducted to determine the child is safe. An assessment of safety is needed prior to next overnight visit with the child's mother. CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the child. A new safety assessment has been completed and it has been determined not to allow this child to have overnight visits with her mother at this time. 	Yes Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services
1267144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary, although it is hoped that documentation issues will be addressed with the case worker through routine supervision. 	No
1314930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the parents successfully completed their case plan and court agreed the case should be closed. 	No
1275452	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. No additional action by Clark County was necessary. The children are currently safe in relative placements. However, it appears that a friend of the parents, with whom they were last reported living, has been cleared for placement of the children. There should be considerably more monitoring of the parent's treatment progress, including consistent negative drug tests, before consideration of placing the children back with 	No

	them (including in the home of the friend whose background was checked).	
1276580	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing notes in UNITY do not indicate an assessment was conducted to determine the child is safe. • An assessment of safety is needed immediately. • CCDFS was notified immediately of these findings and initiated an immediate response to evaluate the circumstances of the child. • New safety assessments were completed regarding these children. Clark County is working closely with children's school and has requested Children's Clinical Services to once again work with this family. 	Yes Completed by Clark County Department of Family Services
1321394	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current safety assessment has been completed by Clark County and was located in UNITY. • Staffing notes in UNITY indicate an analysis was conducted to determine the child is safe and a safety plan was not needed. • No additional action by Clark County was necessary because the parents successfully completed their case plan and the court agreed the case should be closed. 	No

Summary of Findings

It was initially believed there were 55 cases that needed to be reviewed, but a closer examination showed there were only 53 cases in question. On the list, two cases were referenced twice.

During the process, state reviewers determined 8 cases needed additional follow up by Clark County Department of Family Services to evaluate the safety of the children. Four of the 8 cases lacked enough documentation in the information system (UNITY) for the reviewers to determine whether Clark County took appropriate steps to assess the safety of the children. In the other four cases, it was noted a new safety assessment or safety plan was warranted. Clark County worked very closely with DCFS staff to ensure the reviewers concerns were addressed.

Several of the other cases reviewed are still open and the families are receiving services from Clark County. Lack of documentation of case activities was a re-occurring theme among the cases. Most of the conclusive activities the reviewers relied on to determine findings were completed by DFS since the Ed Cotton review in the spring of 2006. These activities included new safety assessments completed since the original review and additional court hearings that had taken place. In many incidents it was clear why the original reviewers were concerned about these cases based on a few areas: A) lack of regular contacts between the CCDFS worker and the children; B) lack of regular contacts between the CCDFS worker and the parents; C) lack of documentation of case activities in the system.

The focus of this review was the safety of the children in these 53 cases. In working with Clark County DFS, they informed the state they are currently completing a detailed case review on each of these 53 cases, not only looking at safety factors, but also whether best practices are being applied in these cases. DCFS encourages continuing this review and creating and implementing new policies and increased supervisory oversight responsibilities around deficiencies identified from their review.

Conclusion

Nevada Division of Child and Family Services notified Clark County Department of Family Services immediately regarding the 8 cases found to need follow-up. CCDFS has responded promptly and has addressed the concerns raised by the reviewers to ensure the safety of the children in these cases.