



The General Child
and Family Services
Authority

January 3, 2007

Ms. Linda Burnside
Director, Authority Relations
Child Protection Branch
201 – 114 Garry Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 4V5

Attention: Ms. Penny Smith

Dear Ms. Burnside

Re: Phoenix Sinclair (DOB: April 23, 2000, DOD: March 23, 2006)

The General Authority has received and reviewed the report from the Chief Medical Examiner (CME) with respect to the death of Phoenix Sinclair. As a result of its review the CME made six recommendations, three of which involve the General Authority and the Agency:

Recommendation 2: The CME recommends that the General Authority ensure that the program standards for investigation of allegations of mistreatment of children are followed by agencies under its jurisdiction, specifically the requirement to ensure that the children involved are safe be fulfilled by ensuring that a child about whom a report of suspected abuse or neglect is made is seen by the investigating worker(s).

The General Authority concurs and will communicate this recommendation to the Directors of agencies under its jurisdiction.

Provincial Program Standard 1.1.1 Intake stipulates that when there are protection concerns in a case, the intake worker or the assigned worker has direct contact with the person or family within 10 working days of receiving the referral.

The Child and Family All Nations Coordinated Response (ANCR) has developed a policy for its Tier II Unit with respect to this standard which reinforces the requirement for *face to face contact* by the intake worker with the case reference, as well as with the child if the agency receives a disclosure which causes it to believe that the child may be in need of protection. This policy came into effect in September 2006.

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Provincial Program Standard 1.1.2 Assessment stipulates that within five working days of receiving a report of abuse, during a child protection investigation, the case manager has *face-to-face contact* with the child alleged to be in need of protection.

In response to this Standard, ANCR has developed an *Abuse Investigation Services Program Manual* for its Abuse Investigation Units (AIU) which will investigate and assess all allegations of child abuse on behalf of all Child and Family Services agencies within the city of Winnipeg. The Manual which came into effect in October 2006 ensures a consistent approach in all abuse investigations in accordance with *The Child and Family Services Act*. During the course of an abuse investigation, the child would be interviewed alone unless the child is very young or physically/mentally disabled and requires the support of a third party.

In October 2006, ANCR drafted a procedural manual for the Crisis Response Unit (CRU). The CRU is responsible for assessing all allegations involving child welfare on non open child welfare cases in its designated area. The CRU will respond to crises and intervene in situations where a child may be at acute child protection risk, as defined under *The Child and Family Services Act*. Emergency response related to physical and sexual abuse cases will be directed to the AIU. In cases assessed to be an immediate, within 24 hour response, CRU staff are responsible for making the necessary contact(s) with the child/ren and any significant others. CRU will complete any required Safety Assessment as determined by the Intake Module and manage the crisis prior to referring the case to Tier Two Intake.

Recommendation 5: The CME recommends that the General Authority in conjunction with WCFS ensure that full names are obtained for persons associated with protection case upon (WCFS) becoming aware of involvement of a new individual in a case. The CME further recommends that criminal risk assessments of new family members or associates be requested in cases involving families with a history of child protection concerns.

The General Authority and the Agency concur that there needs to be an agency policy when there are new partners who have recently joined the family and who are having significant access to the children, that background information be gathered related to CFSIS, Abuse Registry and where there is reason to believe the person has had contact with the Justice system and with the police, for a Criminal Risk Assessment.

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