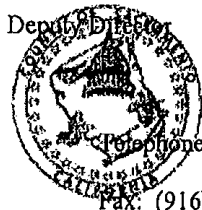


**From:** Coulthard, Laura  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 9:10 AM  
**To:** Lake, Melinda; Pearson, Kim; Villa, Luis  
**Subject:** 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Is this stronger and tighter?

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SACRAMENTO COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF

Lynn  
Frank  
Director

## Health & Human Services

July 23, 2008

**To:** CPS Division Staff  
**From:** Laura Coulthard, Deputy Director  
**SUBJECT: A CALL TO ACTION**

You have probably heard either in the media or through co-workers that we have had an increasing number of child fatalities, one as recently as Monday. I believe our best response to these tragedies is to make sure that each of us understands the facts regarding what happened, to deal with our own personal response to such tragedy, and then to learn the important lessons there for each of us.

Jahmaurae Allen, age four years, was reported to us on June 16, 2008. The allegation was physical abuse, reported by a physician concerned about an adult size fist shaped bruise on his chest. The response was appropriately designated an Immediate Response. It took three days to locate the family. Once located, interviews were conducted and the case was closed as unfounded. The investigation lacked depth; no call to the reporting physician, no consultation with the supervisor, injuries not documented, discrepant information not resolved, consultation with CAARE center not utilized to see if the explanation for the injury was plausible, no collateral to an identified family member which could have shed light on the credibility of the mother.

An inadequate or incomplete investigation leaves children in danger. A tragedy like this reinforces the need to maintain a sense of urgency about every child that comes to our attention and the critical importance of sharing the decision making with those with knowledge or expertise regarding the situation. We have been diligently working to develop expert consultation and inclusive decision making venues across the Division; the CAARE Center contract, the co-located nurses, mental health counselors, the Medical Neglect Review Team, Team Decision Making, alcohol and drug resources, Family Group Decision Making. Use of these resources in making good decisions regarding children and families is not optional.

The "checks and balances" system in place to challenge the initial conclusions drawn regarding a case are threefold, the SDM tools, case review with the supervisor, and collateral contacts for different perspectives and/or technical expertise. Consistent use of all of these tools will help protect social workers from critical thinking errors, eliminate decisions made in isolation, and enhance our ability to keep children safe.

When a child is critically injured or killed we are left struggling to cope with our missed opportunity and to look for ways to shore up our actions. This "shoring up of our actions" is a very sensitive issue. Self-evaluation in the face of these horrifying incidents is painful and exposes mistakes and vulnerabilities in our system and in ourselves. The consequences of avoiding this painful process, however, are worse: Right now, we are seeing an increasing number of missed opportunities. This is a call to action

We are working to determine how to better support this work. We need to examine our current organization, practices, supports, training and accountability. Your thoughts and input will be invaluable in this process. Your division manager and program manager will be working with you.

At the same time that we are looking at systemic improvements, every individual in this organization needs to do some self-reflection and evaluation. Each of us has a critical role to play.

I know you will join me in this effort, because I see you at work, and know you are committed to child safety as your top priority. We are at a crucial point where our intentions must be reflected in our results.

Your managers will be leading a continuing discussion on this issue in the weeks to come and will provide more information on child deaths, recent incidents, and the 2008 CPS Oversight Committee report.

Thank you.

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**From:** Villa. Luis  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 9:31 AM  
**To:** Coulthard. Laura; Lake. Melinda; Pearson. Kim  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

It is definitely stronger and more concise. I believe it will really stir some thoughts and emotions, and I support that this is what needs to occur.

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:12 AM  
**To:** Villa. Luis; Coulthard. Laura; Lake. Melinda  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Yes this is good. Two things: 1) The conclusion was changed to inconclusive yesterday by the supervisor (however I have the original documentation that SW unfounded – and I think this line of inaccurate assessment needs to be relayed) and 2) We added in system that following supervisor and mgt review, concerns regarding investigation and follow-up occurring accordingly.

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**From:** Coulthard. Laura  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:15 AM  
**To:** Lake. Melinda; Pearson. Kim; Villa. Luis  
**Cc:** McCasland. Laura; Frank. Lynn  
**Subject:** 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

latest version. LC

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**From:** Lake. Melinda  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:17 AM  
**To:** Coulthard. Laura; Pearson. Kim; Villa. Luis  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc  
**Attachments:** image001.png

Good.

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**From:** Villa. Luis  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:28 AM  
**To:** Pearson. Kim; Coulthard. Laura; Lake. Melinda  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Maybe I am misunderstanding, but is the inconclusive the official CWS entry? If so, since it was a totally inadequate investigation, with a conclusion of substantiated likely had there been an adequate investigation, should inconclusive be the right finding? This is even heightened more that we now know the boyfriend confessed to the fatal abuse.

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:38 AM  
**To:** Villa. Luis; Coulthard. Laura; Lake. Melinda  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Per the investigation for 6/08 inconclusive as we don't know (although) it clearly points to that this was from him. The lack of investigation could not lead us to subst.

The 7/21 referral is and should be substantiated due to confession for this abuse – he did not confess (at this time) to the prior injury in 6/08.

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**From:** Lake. Melinda  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:43 AM  
**To:** Villa. Luis  
**Cc:** Pearson. Kim; Coulthard. Laura  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc  
**Importance:** High

Good point, strongly recommend that finding be changed to substantiated. I believe the referral is still open with DI so I'll have it changed there.

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**From:** Coulthard. Laura  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:53 AM  
**To:** Pearson. Kim; Villa. Luis; Lake. Melinda  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc  
**Attachments:** image001.png

Good point. From my perspective. for purposes of the disclosure to staff it was determined to be unfounded by the social worker. Changing it to Unsub or Sub at this time we know that inadequate investigation was done which certainly most likely would have been substantiated with collaterals been completed. LC

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**From:** Coulthard. Laura  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 10:53 AM  
**To:** Lake. Melinda; Villa. Luis  
**Cc:** Pearson. Kim  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Changed with notation of why. LC

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**From:** Lake. Melinda  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 11:00 AM  
**To:** Pearson. Kim; Villa. Luis; Coulthard. Laura  
**Subject:** findings  
**Importance:** High  
**Attachments:** image001.png

Kim, I think the 6/08 needs to be amended to substantiated based on the doctor's statement if nothing else. I also think it's appropriate to add the suspect given all the new information. Chrono entries should explain the discrepancies between findings and actions.

Melinda

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 11:12 AM  
**To:** Coulthard. Laura; Lake. Melinda; Villa. Luis  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

I'm at loss here. Luis and I just discussed. I certainly think as in my other e-mail that 7/21 is subst. The 6/08, in a court of law with this shoddy investigation, could we concluded that he did do this? There is no victim to reinterview.

I tried to leave us an out of we are concerned regarding the investigation and follow-up accordingly – that way if he later confesses we have grounds to change.

If this was being submitted fro a CACI grievae - would that hold with no confession to the 6/08, no collateral, and no victim? Melinda I saw your response as I was typing this and my only devils advocate would be how do we know whose adult fist? I know we know but lack of investigation it could have been another adult?

I will change to whatever directive is however my thoughts are given poor investigation and child disclosure and inability to go back. **However if directive to subst. Will do so.**

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**From:** Lake. Melinda  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 11:16 AM  
**To:** Pearson. Kim; Coulthard. Laura; Villa. Luis  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

I think we reasonably suspect him based on new info; the absence of the child's disclosure is irrelevant – I don't think we have to worry about a CACI grievance at this point. ml

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 11:24 AM  
**To:** Lake. Melinda; Coulthard. Laura; Villa. Luis  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc  
**Attachments:** image001.png

No I did not think a CACI would occur – just an example.

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**From:** Coulthard. Laura  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 1:30 PM  
**To:** Pearson. Kim; Lake. Melinda; Villa. Luis  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Note in the file the social workers disposition is under review, plan to make a call to the reporting physician for a discussion, consult with Coulter if need be. Maybe he has confessed to injuring the kids previously so talk to Sgt Reinel. The main point at the moment is that the social worker called it unfounded. L

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 1:39 PM  
**To:** Coulthard. Laura  
**Cc:** Gilbert-Driggs. Patti  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

Sorry I'm on phone w/ Patti is this for our files or are you stating to put this in CWS/CMS? "Social workers disposition is under review" and leave her unfounded assessment alone in CWS/CMS? We had changed her unfounded. We can change back now.

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 1:49 PM  
**To:** Edison. Joni  
**Subject:** FW: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc

I'm waiting for a specific response to this question. If we need to change we are going to do so. We are done, but waiting to see if LC wants my question below to be done.

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**From:** Pearson. Kim  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2008 2:11 PM  
**To:** Edison. Joni  
**Subject:** RE: 072308 call to action.doc2.doc  
**Attachments:** image001.png

We are done.