



STATE OF DELAWARE
Child Death, Near Death and Stillbirth Commission
900 King Street
Wilmington, DE 19801-3341

CAPTA¹ REPORT

In the Matter of
Paige Peterson
Minor Child²

9-03-2008-00007

September 16, 2011

¹ The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act requires the disclosure of facts and circumstances related to a child's near death or death. 42 U.S.C § 5106 a(b)(2)(A)(x). See also, 31 Del.C. § 323 (a).

² To protect the confidentiality of the family, case workers, and other child protection professionals, pseudonyms have been assigned.

Background and Acknowledgements

The Child Death, Near Death and Stillbirth Commission (“CDNDSC”) was statutorily created in 1995 after a pilot project showed the effectiveness of such a review process for preventing future child deaths. The mission of CDNDSC is to safeguard the health and safety of all Delaware children as set forth in 31 Del.C., Ch., 3.

Multi-disciplinary Review Panels meet monthly and conduct a retrospective review of the history and circumstances surrounding each child’s death or near death and determine whether system recommendations are necessary to prevent future deaths or near deaths. The process brings professionals and experts from a variety of disciplines together to conduct in-depth case reviews, create multi-faceted recommendations to improve systems and encourage interagency collaboration to end the mortality of children in Delaware.

Summary of Incident

The case regarding Paige Peterson is considered a near death incident due to physical abuse perpetrated by the child’s mother. At the time of Paige’s near death, Paige was three years eleven months of age and residing in the home of her mother and alleged father.

On the day of near death incident, Paige was brought to a medical aid unit by her mother and alleged father with complaints of burns to her feet. The medical aid unit noted burns to the right ankle and foot, burns to the left foot, and bruises to the forehead and back. The burns were documented as “likely immersions burns”. The family was directed to take Paige to a children’s hospital for further evaluation and treatment. Upon arrival at the children’s hospital, Paige was admitted with concern of physical abuse. Contusions to the bridge of Paige’s nose, scalp, neck, abdominal wall, thighs and chest wall were noted. Scratches were also noted on Paige’s chest and abdomen. Over the course of the next day, Paige underwent a wound debridement and dressing change. Paige received a diagnosis of probable third degree burns to the left foot. A skeletal survey was completed and yielded negative results. Paige was then transferred to a hospital specializing in burns for continued evaluation and treatment. Four days after the near death incident, Paige underwent an excisional debridement and wound dressing. Five days following that procedure, Paige underwent a skin graft to the left foot from a donor site of her right thigh. Complications included a bacterial infection of her wounds for which antibiotics were administered intravenously. Paige had a total of 3 1/2 percent Body Surface Area (BSA) burns with 3 percent BSA second degree and 0.5 percent BSA third degree. Paige was discharged into the care of her alleged father twenty one days after her near death incident.

The Division of Family Services’ Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line received an urgent referral alleging the physical abuse of Paige. The case was accepted for investigation and a joint investigation between the Division of Family Services and law enforcement began. Child’s mother was substantiated for physical abuse, level IV after she admitted to inflicting the Paige’s injuries. A criminal no contact order was also put in placed between mother and child and the Division of Family Services’ Safety Plan prohibited mother to have contact with the child.

Mother was arrested and charged with felony assault in the second degree and felony endangering the welfare of a child. Criminal prosecution resulted in mother pleading guilty but

mentally ill to assault in the second degree and endangering the welfare of a child. Mother was sentenced to a two year mandatory sentence in the state hospital for the mentally ill.

System Recommendations

The following ancillary recommendation was put forth by the Commission:

- (1) CDNDSC shall send a letter to the medical aid unit, that performed the initial physical examination of the child, expressing their concern regarding the transportation of the child by the parents to the children's hospital, for further examination and treatment, when suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect is suspected and when the perpetrator is believed to be the child's parent(s).