

January 18, 2005

Albin Mathiowetz
Chief Clerk of the House
211 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: 2004 Child Maltreatment Review Panel Report

Dear Mr. Mathiowetz:

As required by the Laws of Minnesota Special Session 2001, chapter 9, article 11, section 3, I respectfully submit this Report on the Child Maltreatment Review Panel activities for calendar year 2004. In accordance with the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, we are sending six copies of the report to the Legislative Reference Library.

The Child Maltreatment Review Panel was created, during a special session of the 2001 Minnesota Legislature. The panel reviews investigating agency determinations regarding maltreatment of a child, in state licensed facilities; such as child care centers, correctional institutions, or schools in response to requests received under section [626.556](#), subdivision 10i, paragraph (b). An adult, acting on behalf of a child, may make a written request to the panel for a review.

The Child Maltreatment Review Panel meets quarterly to review cases. The panel requests and encourages written statements and documentation from all parties involved in an investigation being reviewed. The Minnesota Department of Human Services panel coordinator manages all communication with the Child Maltreatment Review Panel.

The panel included the following required agency representatives for calendar year 2004:

Amy Roberts and Barbara Jondahl, Minnesota Department of Education
Roberta Opheim, Minnesota Office of the Ombudsman for Mental
Health/Mental Retardation
David Johnson, Minnesota Department of Corrections
Ruth Clinard and John Langworthy, Minnesota Department of Human
Services
Nancy Blume, Minnesota Department of Health

The Office of Ombudsman for Crime Victims was eliminated in 2003.

The Child Maltreatment Review Panel held three quarterly meetings during calendar year 2004. Meetings were held on February 19, 2004, April 22, 2004, and October 28, 2004. A July meeting was not held as there were no cases to review. One case from 2003, and two cases from 2004, respectively, were reviewed at these meetings.

The statistical information is as follows:

- **Number of reports for calendar year:** One case from 2003 and two cases from 2004 were submitted to the panel for review during calendar year 2004. Two cases involved allegations of child maltreatment at a DHS licensed child care center; and the third involved an allegation of child maltreatment in a family child care in Washington County.
- **Reports returned for reconsideration:** No cases were returned to an investigating agency for reconsideration. However, in the case from Washington County, the panel submitted concerns for consideration by the county for future child maltreatment investigations.

The panel's recommendations for improvement of the investigative process are as follows:

- **Observation:** The Child Maltreatment Review Panel's work during 2004 crystallized an issue present in many cases reviewed by the panel over three years. Frequently important information is not included in the notification of determination letters sent to parent(s) that would enable them to better understand how the investigating agency arrived at its determination.
- **Recommendation:** The State should require basic and advanced analytical report writing training for all agencies involved in investigating child maltreatment allegations. The training should focus on how to clearly communicate the basis for investigating agency's final determination of child maltreatment.
- **Observation:** Counties find themselves conducting facility investigations and child protection assessment or investigations at the same time. These require different types of final reports. A facility investigation requires that a public memorandum of the investigation be drafted.

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- **Recommendation:** Training should be required for counties on writing public memorandums regarding child maltreatment investigations in facilities. The training should focus on the distinction between a public memorandum for a facility investigation and a summary of a family child protection assessment or investigation.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Goodno
Commissioner