



Critical Incident Rapid Response Team

Ra'nesha Jackson

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Central Region

Circuit 10

Polk County, Florida

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Executive Summary

On January 5, 2022, the Department received a report regarding the death of 6-year-old Ra'nesha Jackson after she was struck by a truck when she went into traffic while looking for her mother, 37-year-old Tracey Wilson. In the early morning hours, the parents were in a verbal altercation at which point the mother left the residence, leaving Ra'nesha and her four younger siblings (ages 9 months to 4 years of age) sleeping in the home. The father, 55-year-old Craig Jackson had left the home a few minutes before the mother left the home. Law Enforcement observed Ra'nesha alone near the road and proceeded to turn around to check on her; however, Ra'nesha walked onto the highway and was struck by an on-coming truck. An autopsy was conducted and determined the cause of death as blunt impact to head pedestrian vs motor vehicle collision.

Because the family was involved in a verified report received within 12 months of Ra'nesha's death, DCF Secretary Shevaun Harris deployed a Critical Incident Rapid Response Team (CIRRT) to Polk County. This report presents the team's findings, a summary of the family's child welfare history, the family's composition, and analysis of Polk County's child welfare service providers. The team reviewed the family's prior interventions in the child welfare system to assess for any potential systemic issues within the local system of care.

The review team consisted of representatives from DCF's Quality Office, Southeast Region, and a Behavioral Health Consultant from the Northeast Region, Kids Central, Inc. (a community-based care lead agency in the Central Region), and the Associate Statewide Child Protection Team (CPT) Medical Director.

The team reviewed case records involving all key case participants and conducted interviews with child welfare professionals involved in the recent interventions. The following agencies were interviewed during the review: DCF Child Protective Investigations (CPI) frontline and leadership staff, DCF's local behavioral health consultant (BHC), and Neighbor to Families (Family Support Services).

This report represents the team's findings, including the child welfare history, the family composition, and a summary of the local child welfare services providers, as well as an analysis of the system of care.

Summary of findings:

Practice Assessment

- CPI staff appropriately identified present danger at the onset of the investigation and immediately implemented an in-home safety plan.
- There was insufficient information documented in the case to support the final safety determination of SAFE and case closure.

Organizational Assessment

- Most professionals involved in this case from the various agencies were well-experienced in their respective areas and expressed positive, collaborative working relationships with each other.

Service Array

- Interviews reflected that there are adequate services available within Circuit 10 to meet the community's needs. The family was referred to Neighbor to Family for enhanced safety management and the mother was referred to Tri-County for a substance abuse evaluation. The family did not engage in or follow up with these services.

Case Participants

Name	Age at Time of Incident	Relationship
Ra'nesha Jackson	6 years old	Decedent
██████████	4 years old	Sibling
██████████	1 year old	Sibling
██████████	1 year old	Sibling
██████████	8 months old	Sibling
Tracey Wilson	37 years old	Mother
Craig Jackson	55 years old	Father

Child Welfare Summary

The Jackson/Wilson family has a lengthy history with the Department from 2008-2021, with most concerns stemming from substance use and household violence and resulting in out-of-home judicial action in 2018.

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In September 2015, the mother gave birth to ██████████ substance-exposed newborn (SEN), after she and Ra'nesha were positive for THC. The mother engaged with Tri-County a substance abuse treatment program and declined the healthy start program.

In October 2016, a report alleged the mother engaged in a physical altercation with a friend while holding Ra'nesha in her arms. Ra'nesha subsequently hit her head on the concrete when the mother fell. At the time, the mother was drinking alcohol. The mother refused a drug screen. At case closure, the mother and her three older children were residing in a Salvation Army shelter.

In January 2017, the Department received a report with concerns that the mother was again using substances and leaving her three children with other adults without making appropriate arrangements. The mother refused a drug screen, and the extended family denied any concerns. The report was closed with no indicators of maltreatment.

In 2018, a total of three reports were received. The first report was received in January when the mother gave birth to ██████████ and both mother and child were positive for THC. The mother engaged with community service providers through STEPS which is a program designed to support clients through the steps to sobriety. The second report was received in June and is the first report involving the father, Craig Jackson. The father was arrested after a verbal argument turned physical and he began choking the mother. At the time of this report, there was no reported pattern of violence and the mother wanted to drop any charges as she felt she was too hasty in reporting them. The investigation was closed with no substantiated findings of household violence. The final 2018 report was received in December after the parents engaged in another violent altercation. There were additional concerns of substance use as the mother tested

positive for cocaine and THC and the father was positive for cocaine. At that time, the parents refused to work with any services; therefore, to maintain the children's safety, they were removed from the parents' care. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and the younger two, Ra'nesha and [REDACTED], were placed in licensed foster care.

The parents engaged in out-of-home judicial services, and both were compliant with their case plan, which included attending a parenting program, complying with random drug screens, undergoing evaluations for anger management, and following up with associated recommendations, and participating in individual counseling. In May 2020, the parents engaged in the Family Builders program which focuses on guiding the families through the foster care process and providing the children and parents support with concrete, short-term needs.

Ra'nesha and [REDACTED] were subsequently reunified with their parents in July 2020. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. It is important to note that [REDACTED] were born in February 2020 and were not placed under supervision.

Three months following reunification, the Department received a report in October 2020 due to concerns that Ra'nesha was injured when the parents engaged in a physical altercation. Ra'nesha was not observed with any injuries. The family was under post-placement supervision and case management remained involved with the family until January 2021, when the judicial case was closed.

In April 2021, an investigation was received at [REDACTED] birth because he and the mother were positive for cocaine and THC. The father agreed to a drug screen and was negative for any tested substances. Due to ongoing concerns for the mother's substance use, present danger was identified, and a safety plan was implemented. The mother submitted to three drug screens throughout the investigation, all of which were negative for all substances. The family was referred to the Neighbor to Family (NTF) program for emergency safety management services. In addition, the mother was referred to Tri-County for substance abuse treatment, Healthy Start, and Peace River for a domestic violence evaluation in which she did not engage. The investigation closed with verified findings of substance-exposed newborn and substance misuse with the mother as the caregiver responsible. NTF closed their case in July 2021 after failed attempts to engage the mother in a substance abuse evaluation at Tri-County.

In September 2021, an investigation was received concerning Ra'nesha being injured by the father, sustaining an injury to her eye after he swung a belt at her. Ra'nesha and the family denied the injury occurred, but Ra'nesha stated she receives spankings with a belt when she misbehaves. Ra'nesha was observed to be free of any injuries or marks. Collaterals with the school and a relative were completed and did not present any concerns at that time. CPT was contacted, and an exception was granted. The report was closed with no substantiated findings of physical injury.

System of Care Review

This review is designed to provide an assessment of the child welfare system's interactions with the Jackson/Wilson family and to identify issues that may have influenced the system's response and decision making.

Practice Assessment

PURPOSE: This practice assessment examines whether the child welfare professionals' actions and decision making regarding the family were consistent with the Department's policies and protocols.

FINDING A: CPI staff appropriately identified present danger at the onset of the investigation and immediately implemented an in-home safety plan.

The Florida Abuse Hotline received a call on April 24, 2021, with concerns for the infant sibling [REDACTED] and his mother testing positive for cocaine and THC upon his birth. Upon investigative commencement, the mother and infant had been released from the hospital and the family was contacted, interviewed, and observed at their home. The mother admitted to a prior history of marijuana use and indicated that she smoked marijuana while pregnant, however denied cocaine use and was unaware why she or the infant would have tested positive for it. The mother indicated whenever she would use marijuana, it was not at the home or around the children. The mother indicated that she is aware of the effects of using substances has on her, as a person, and while pregnant.

The father was interviewed and was drug-screened which was negative for all substances. The father did not have any recent knowledge of the mother using substances while she was pregnant and indicated she must have been using while out of the home with friends. He indicated that he does have knowledge of the mother's prior history with substances and that the mother is "Jamaican and was raised around marijuana and it is in her blood." The father did admit that he himself has a history of substance use, however denied any use in recent years.

CPI staff appropriately identified present danger at the onset of the investigation due to the mother/infant testing positive for illegal substances, as well as previous significant prior history with the parents regarding drugs and domestic violence and the long criminal history of the father around drug sales. In 2018, the older children, Ra'nisha and [REDACTED], were sheltered from both the mother and father due to cocaine and marijuana use as well as active domestic violence between the parents. The children were placed in relative care and both parents were compliant with case plan tasks to include random drug screens, parenting, counseling, and an anger management evaluation. The judicial case was terminated in January 2021. An in-home safety plan was implemented with the family, in which a relative would temporarily reside in the home to monitor the mother's impulsive behaviors and provide safety to the children. Pursuant to CFOP-170-7, Chapter 2 which provides guidance in developing present danger safety plans, the safety plan was sufficient. Also, immediate referrals were made for the mother and child to Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies and the family was provided with safe sleeping education information.

Supervisory consultations were conducted at pre-commencement, the determination of present danger, and post-commencement. A timely second tier consultation was completed due to the identification of present danger and the implementation of a safety plan. Discussions were around the case dynamics, information obtained upfront, safety plan actions, and concerns around the family condition were held. It was also recommended during the second-tier consultation that information be gathered for possible legal staffing. The investigation was

transferred and assigned timely to the Substance Exposed Newborn Unit for further investigation. Upon case transfer, contacts between the CPIs and CPI Supervisors (CPIS) were made to discuss the family, investigation, and next steps. However, there is no formal process for discussions to be held between program administrators (PA) at case transfer and one did not take place as part of this investigation. The CPI also completed an upfront referral to NTF for services to be initiated upfront and support to the family, ensuring the engagement of referrals was made.

FINDING B: There was insufficient information documented on the case to support the final safety determination of SAFE and case closure. In addition, had the final risk assessment been scored correctly as “very high” as opposed to “high,” it would have required a second-tier consultation prior to investigative closure.

The present danger safety plan was left in effect through the life of the investigation for further documentation to be obtained for a final safety determination. The documentation within the investigation does not reflect that ongoing monitoring or communication occurred with the informal safety management provider. The documentation was minimal in reflecting conversations with the parents and verbal children around the safety plan effectiveness and any new concerns or incidents.

Sufficient information around the protective capacities of the father to manage the impulsive behaviors of the mother was not documented when the safety plan was terminated, and the investigation closed. The information documented was not sufficient to support the father was able to manage the danger threat the mother posed to the children. The mother has an extensive history of substance use including cocaine and frequent relapse and gave birth to three substance-exposed children. Documentation indicates the father reported that he was unaware of when the mother used, nor could he identify when she was high. Additionally, he wished he would have kept a better eye on her when she comes home after going out with friends as he is aware of her history of substance use. There was also no follow-up with the recent case manager who had been involved with the family through the recent dependency case. This action would have been beneficial in providing the CPI information around the parent’s behavior changes, case plan compliance, and the family conditions at the time of closure.

The case was transferred to NTF for enhanced safety management services (this program is addressed as part of the Service Array). A staffing was held on June 1, 2021, with NTF. The team determined that if the mother does not engage with the programs referred through the investigation, the CPI would staff with legal, but there was no information to support the change in that trajectory for a final safety determination of SAFE

A consultation with the circuit’s Behavioral Health Consultant (BHC) was completed during the April investigation; however, the consultation form does not reflect that the history of the mother’s possible mental health and/or past substance misuse was addressed. In addition, there was no follow-up consultation by the CPI noted to assist with engagement when the mother was not following through with her appointments. This would have been beneficial in providing insight on how to better engage the mother in conversation and identify any barriers to her following through with services.

At the closure of the April 2021 investigation, the final risk assessment was marked as “High.” Several of the risk assessment questions were answered incorrectly and therefore did not provide a full picture of the ongoing risk to the children. The assessment should have been identified as “Very High,” which in turn would have required another second-tier consultation prior

to closure pursuant to CFOP 170-5, Chapter 27-2 C. This would have allowed another opportunity for the case to have a full review and discussion of the case held by a program administrator or designee prior to closure.

Organizational Assessment

PURPOSE: This section examines the level of staffing, experience, caseload, training, and performance as potential factors in the management of this case.

FINDING A: Most professionals involved in this case from the various agencies were well-experienced in their respective areas with manageable caseloads noted for both investigations and case management staff. In addition, interviews reflected collaborative working relationships within and between the program area.

The CPIs and CPIS on the prior verified report both have appropriate educational backgrounds. The CPI who was initially assigned the investigation during a weekend on-call shift was new to child welfare. The on-call supervisors provided appropriate guidance to the CPI at every juncture. The following business day, the primary CPIS conducted a supervisory consultation that was thorough and appropriate. The CPI did an outstanding job identifying present danger, information collection, and implementing a sufficient present danger safety plan. The assigned SEN unit CPI was in the role of a CPI for a year and a half and the CPIS had more than 10 years of child welfare experience. In addition, the SEN CPI received specialized training in substance use issues that assist in the identification of dynamics and concerns related to substance-related maltreatments.

There were two care managers with NTF who were assigned to the family's case to provide support services. Both were experienced in their receptive areas, the primary care manager had experience and knowledge of domestic violence and the secondary care manager was a former CPI.

Service Intervention/Array

PURPOSE: This section assesses the inventory of services within the child welfare system of care.

FINDING A: Interviews reflected that there are adequate services available within Circuit 10 to meet the community's needs. The family was referred to Neighbor to Family for enhanced safety management and the mother was referred to Tri-County for a substance abuse evaluation. While the service referrals were appropriate in this case, the family did not engage or follow up with the recommended providers.

NTF provides Enhanced Safety Management (ESM), which is a hybrid program of safety management and family support services. ESM goes into the home weekly and helps connect families to community providers to focus on the family's needs as determined by CPI. They make announced/unannounced visits to the home when the children are deemed safe but are at high/very high risk for ongoing abuse and neglect. They are also able to be part of the safety plan; however, they were not added to the present danger plan within this case. It was identified that the mother in this case was in need of a referral to Peace River to be connected to a domestic violence advocate, follow up with the Tri-County referral for a substance abuse evaluation, and connect and follow up with Healthy Start for engagement.

The initial Family Care Manager who was assigned to the family with NTF had a background in domestic violence and provided support and education; a referral was made, but the mother did not engage in service. A Tri-County referral for a substance abuse assessment and treatment recommendations was completed, as well as a Healthy Start referral.

Staffings were held between NTF and CPI staff during the investigation, specifically for CPI staff to assist in re-engagement efforts with the family. Communication was primarily via email between providers and the CPI. Additionally, NTF was proactive in ensuring there was no lapse of service provision when the primary worker went out on medical leave and another staff member was assigned the case and continued engagement efforts with the family.

The CPIs can complete referrals to Tri-County, which provides substance abuse assessments and follow-up recommendations and referrals. Circuit 10 also has a BHC who averages 80-120 consultations with CPI staff monthly. Most consultations occur via phone with the CPI; however, the BHC is available to complete joint visits or brief assessments. Regarding this family, the BHC completed an assessment with the mother via a virtual platform and recommended Tri-County for an evaluation and to follow up on any recommended treatment.