Critical Incident Review Team
Final Report

A Critical Incident Review Team (CIRT) is convened by the Department Director when the Department becomes aware of a critical incident resulting in a child fatality that was reasonably believed to be the result of abuse and the child, child's sibling or another child living in the household with the child has had contact with the Department (ODHS). The reviews are called by the Department Director to quickly analyze ODHS actions in relation to the critical incident and to ensure the safety and well-being of all children within the custody of ODHS or during a child protective service assessment. The CIRT must complete a final report which serves to provide an overview of the critical incident relevant Department history and may include recommendations regarding actions that should be implemented to increase child safety. Reports must not contain any confidential information or records that may not be disclosed to members of the public. The CIRT report is created at a specific time as required by statute and does not account for events occurring after posting of the report. Versions of all final reports are posted on the ODHS website.

CIRT information

CIRT ID: EAE1MINP9Y

Date of critical incident: August 16, 2025

Date Department became aware of fatality: August 16, 2025

Date Department caused an investigation to be made August 16, 2025

Date of CPS assessment disposition: September 30, 2025

Date CIRT assigned: August 21, 2025

Date Final Report submitted: November 26, 2025

Date(s) of CIRT meeting(s): September 12, 2025; October 24, 2025

Number of participants: 14; 19

Members of the public? No; No

Critical incident description

Date of report: August 16, 2025

Assignment decision: 72 Hours

Allegation(s): Neglect by the mother; Threat of Harm by the mother

Disposition(s): Founded, Founded

ODHS received a report on August 16, 2025, alleging neglect to the child, who was 4 years old. and the sibling, who was 3 years old, by their mother. The reporter said that around 1:30 p.m., the mother called 911 saying that the child was attacked by a dog at the property the mother and children were staying at. The mother reported that she was working on her vehicle, and the child was out with her, but it became too hot, and she instructed them to go inside a mobile home on the property to play with kittens. After some time, the mother realized that the child was not in the mobile home, and she went to look for them. The mother came across a large dog attacking the child, who was deceased from the injuries. The dog was reported not to have a history of aggression and according to the mother, no one heard or saw the attack to her knowledge.

The CPS caseworker spoke to a law enforcement collateral on August 19, 2025. The officers indicated that they interviewed the mother briefly on August 16, but the scene was chaotic due to the difficult circumstances of the critical incident.

The mother told officers that the family arrived at the property the day prior to the critical incident and ended up staying the night there because their vehicle had a flat tire. She was working on the vehicle when the child asked to go inside and play with kittens at a mobile home on the property. Shortly after, the sibling approached the mother while she was working on the

vehicle, and she told them to go inside and join the child playing with kittens. Later, the sibling returned to the mother alone, which prompted the mother to look for the child in the mobile home. An unrelated teenager, who owned both the kittens and the dog involved in the attack, told the mother that the child did not come to the home. The mother left the mobile home and looked for the child around the property. The mother found the large dog on top of the child and immediately tried to get the dog off of them. The mother was bitten during the incident. Another adult on the property came and helped to get the dog off the mother and child.

The officer stated that the sibling did not appear to be injured in any way but was asking where the child was. The officer had concerns that the sibling witnessed the attack. It was unclear if the family had been staying at the home for any extended period of time. The mother indicated that their primary home was in another town, but it was infested with rats, so she had come to stay at the property to help the property owner clean it up. The officer had no indications that the mother was under the influence of a substance at the time of the critical incident but stated that the people they observed on the property appeared to be regular users, per the officer's experience and training.

The CPS caseworker made numerous attempts to contact the mother and the sibling, beginning on August 19, 2025. During these attempts, the CPS caseworker spoke to a relative who said that the mother had stayed there the previous two nights and was supposed to return that evening. The relative did not know her current whereabouts but said that she had a pattern of staying with them off and on. The relative alluded to ongoing substance use by the mother, but they did not know what substances.

In the following days, the CPS caseworker continued to try and locate the mother and the sibling, as they collected collateral information. Despite these efforts, it was challenging to gather the family's current whereabouts. ODHS sought and was granted a protective custody order for the sibling's safety.

The CPS caseworker spoke to the owner of the property where the critical incident occurred. The caseworker observed that there were several inhabitable structures on the property. The family was reportedly staying in a trailer on the property. The exterior of the trailer had broken

glass, sharp metal debris and a large pile of Legos strewn about. There were vehicles on the property in differing states of disrepair. The caseworker documented concerns for the safety of the environment, particularly with loose supervision of small children.

The property owner said that the mother had not been to the property since the day of the critical incident and that she had received assistance from the relative. The mother and the children started staying at the property sporadically a couple of weeks prior to the critical incident. She would go there because she was dating someone who lived there, though the property owner did not know their full name.

The property owner indicated that on the day of the critical incident, they awoke to a scuffle in the front yard, so they ran downstairs where they helped the mother bring the child inside and assisted in administering CPR to the child. The property owner said that the mother would often leave both children unsupervised, and the children were always seeking attention from individuals on the property. The property owner reported that the child was very friendly with dogs and had been told numerous times to not interact with the dog who attacked them. The property owner went on to express concerns for the mother using substances and her parenting decisions. They reported the mother would often be awake at odd hours and often left the children unsupervised while she was in the trailer with her significant other. The owner had concerns that she chose to stay there when she had other options. The property owner admitted that their parcel was not in a state that was suitable for small children.

The CPS caseworker spoke to a Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP) collateral, who indicated that the mother self-referred to SSP but the SSP worker was unable to engage the mother after multiple attempts.

The CPS caseworker spoke to numerous other collaterals, family friends, neighbors and relatives. These collaterals expressed concerns for the environmental safety on the property where the critical incident occurred due to the concerns mentioned by the property owner. There were concerns raised about the dogs on the property, and two collaterals indicated that the dog who attacked the child was known to be aggressive and had bitten a neighbor. They reported concern for the mother’s substance use and its impact on her parenting and about

the individuals who spent time around the children. They articulated numerous situations where the children were left unsupervised.

The CPS caseworker ultimately had face-to-face contact with the mother on August 21, 2025, at the relative's home. The mother reported a consistent narrative of what was originally reported to ODHS. The mother said she had a history of substance use including methamphetamine and heroin. She reported that she attended supportive services in the past. She reported using marijuana consistently but did not disclose other substance use. The caseworker stated that her report conflicted with information that was gathered during the CPS assessment, which reflected concerns for substance use and her level of supervision to the children. The mother stated that she believed that the collateral reports were vindictive toward her and were untrue. However, she stated that she would benefit from further treatment for her substance use and stated she would pursue it. The CPS caseworker made referrals for the local Recovery Support Team to assist in outreach and coordination of services.

The mother stated that the relative was a positive support to her, and she created a family plan where the sibling would reside with the relative.

This plan shifted to an initial safety plan overseen by ODHS on August 29, 2025. In the case history, ODHS had contacted the relative in attempts to locate the mother. The relative was not forthcoming with information about the mother's whereabouts or struggles with substance use, which inhibited ODHS' ability to assess the children's safety in their mother's care. Due to this dynamic, and the impulsive nature of the mother's substance use and decision-making, the family-made plan changed to an out-of-home safety plan overseen by ODHS.

The relative indicated that the mother would often leave the children in their care when she was not doing well, and the children were comfortable in their home. The sibling was observed to be well cared for with no concerns from the CPS caseworker in subsequent follow ups at their home.

The mother expressed desire to pursue services and was evidently working toward attending services. However, the mother would not sign releases of information to confirm attendance, citing concerns for confidentiality.

As the CPS assessment progressed, the mother's engagement with ODHS declined. In one brief conversation where the CPS caseworker reached her by phone, the caseworker asked about this pattern of behavior. The mother indicated that she never received any calls or texts from them, and the caseworker provided screenshots of their attempts to reach her during the CPS assessment.

The allegations of neglect to the child and threat of harm to the sibling were coded as founded. The information gathered during the CPS assessment illustrated a pattern of behavior where the mother's substance use impacted her ability to safely parent. The child was attacked and killed by a dog while they were unsupervised, and the mother's behavior posed a threat of severe harm to the sibling's safety.

Relevant case history

Date of report: July 24, 2024

Assignment decision: 72 Hours

Allegation(s): Threat of Harm by the mother

Disposition(s): Unfounded

ODHS received a report on July 24, 2024, with allegations for threat of harm to the sibling, who was 2 years old, and the child, who was 3 years old, in the care of their mother. The reporter stated that the mother appeared under the influence of substances because she couldn't keep her stories straight, was trying to do multiple things at once, had lots of energy and was unable to regulate her emotions. There was no evidence of substances or associated paraphernalia in the home. The home had boxes all over, was very cluttered and had a single pathway through the home.

This report was assigned for CPS assessment because of the previous assessment coded unable to locate, dated December 23, 2023, which is outlined in this document below.

The CPS caseworker had contact with the mother and the children on July 24, 2024. It's important to note that this contact occurred while the CPS caseworker was assessing the safety

of unrelated children who were being cared for by the mother, and this was the sole contact that the CPS caseworker had with the family during this CPS assessment period. The companion report is not summarized here as the information is duplicative and involves allegations by unrelated parents, which were coded unfounded.

The mother was staying at a relative's home, which had multiple structures on the property. She stated she was living in what was another relative's home and was now residing there to help to clean it up. The CPS caseworker observed that the home was cluttered but had clear paths, and the children were observed to understand where there were safe areas to play. The mother was observed to be attentive to the children during this visit.

When the caseworker asked the mother why she did not respond to communication in the previous CPS assessment, she said that she did not know anyone was trying to contact her and she hadn't lived at the address where the previous caseworker attempted contact in years. The CPS caseworker asked the mother about the allegations from the report dated December 23, 2023. That incident involved a high-speed chase with the children in the back of the fleeing car, driven by the mother. The mother provided a story where her relative's friend was making her feel uncomfortable and she would not let him into the car. She reported she was punched by them, and she sped away when they exited the vehicle. She did not realize that the police were trying to pull her over because she was in a daze. The caseworker asked if the friend was the male named in that report, and she indicated that she did not know who that person was. The caseworker asked if that person was the child's father, and she responded no. The male listed in that report was charged related to this incident but there was no record of the mother's arrest, or any other charges in the LEA database.

The mother denied any current substance use. She said she had completed services but did not remember the name of provider.

The CPS caseworker spoke to the relative, who said they were present at the incident but had nothing further to add. The relative reported that they did not ask many questions of the mother because they assumed she would be untruthful. The relative did not want to speak badly about the mother but indicated that when they observed her in his home, that she was

always doing well. The relative said that they would take care of the children if she were not doing well. There had been many times where the relative had taken the children into their care. Regarding the attempts to contact the mother in the previous CPS assessment, the relative said that they told her about the CPS assessment and assumed that the matter was resolved.

The CPS caseworker spoke to a family friend who communicated no concerns.

Subsequent attempts to contact the mother were unsuccessful, though the CPS caseworker spoke to her briefly via phone. When she realized the CPS assessment was still open, she reported she was camping on the coast without cell service and declined to tell the caseworker whom she was staying with.

The allegations of threat of harm to the sibling, who was 2 years old, and the child, who was 3 years old, were coded unfounded. There was no information supporting that the mother posed a threat of harm to her children.

Date of report: June 29, 2024

Assignment decision: Closed at Screening

Allegation(s): Not Applicable

Disposition(s): Not Applicable

ODHS received a report on June 29, 2024, with concerns for the child, who was 3 years old, in the care of their mother. The reporter said that they observed the mother driving about a quarter mile with the child in her lap, going from one store to another. The mother was reportedly letting the child steer the vehicle and was making a game of it.

The report was closed at screening, as it was not a report of abuse. The ORCAH screener noted that there was a CPS assessment recently closed with an unable to locate disposition, and this report did not provide new information about the family’s whereabouts.

Date of report: December 23, 2023

Assignment decision: Assign: 72 Hours

Allegation(s): Threat of Harm

Disposition(s): Unable to Locate

ODHS received a report on December 23, 2023, with allegations of threat of harm to the child, who was 2 years old, and their sibling, who was 1 year old, by their mother. The reporter stated that the mother and her significant other were involved in stealing items from a local store. Local law enforcement agency (LEA) officers located their vehicle and engaged in a pursuit. The car pulled over, and the mother's significant other exited the vehicle on foot and an officer followed on foot. While the mother was still in the vehicle, she resumed driving the vehicle and another officer re-engaged pursuit. The mother was said to be driving at speeds of 85 mph in a 45-mph speed zone. The mother pulled off on a side road, where the significant other was also located. Both children were in the back seat of the car during the entire incident. The mother was arrested for charges of reckless endangerment and reckless driving. The relative arrived to pick the children up following the mother's arrest. After discussion on the scene, officers opted not to book the mother and released her.

The CPS caseworker attempted face-to-face contact with the family numerous times between December 26, 2023 and May 31, 2023. During the contact attempts, the caseworker indicated that the mother's vehicle was parked outside the home, with car seats strapped in the backseat. However, no one answered the door during the CPS assessment period. The caseworker additionally worked with the mother's Self-Sufficiency Programs family coach to facilitate contact, but their attempts were also unsuccessful.

The CPS caseworker spoke to a local LEA officer, who indicated that the aforementioned charges she was arrested for were ultimately not filed. The officer said that they did not observe any concerns with the children during the incident; that they seemed worried but were not crying, upset or fearful.

The CPS caseworker spoke to the relative, who said that they would tell the mother about the CPS assessment and would ask her to call the caseworker. The relative did not express any concerns for the children and said that they saw both of the children often.

The CPS caseworker made collateral contact with the children's pediatrician's office. The staff there reported that the mother would sometimes call for triage but would often cancel or not show up for appointments. The pediatrician's office attempted to assist the mother by setting up a primary care provider for herself, but all services were declined.

The allegations for threat of harm to the child, who was 2 years old, and the sibling, who was 1 year old, by their mother, were coded as unable to locate. The CPS caseworker was not able to contact the mother in person, via phone or via letter during the CPS assessment.

Date of report: April 4, 2023

Assignment decision: Closed at Screening

Allegation(s): Not Applicable

Disposition(s): Not Applicable

On April 4, 2023, ODHS received a report with concerns for the child, who was 1 year old, and their sibling, who was 11 months old, in the care of their mother. The reporter stated that on March 30, 2023, the mother called her prescriber's office back and stated it would have been unsafe for her to answer when they called earlier in the day. The mother reported that she was currently safe but that her significant other was going to jail imminently. The reporter said that the mother lived with a relative. The mother reportedly used marijuana, but there was no further information provided about substance use in the home. They indicated the mother had mental health diagnoses, including opioid use disorder. The mother received supportive services. No further information was provided.

The report was closed at screening as it was not a report of abuse.

Date of report: April 28, 2022

Assignment decision: 72 Hours

Allegation(s): Threat of Harm by the mother

Disposition(s): Unfounded

ODHS received a report on April 28, 2022, alleging threat of harm to the child, who was 1 year old, and their sibling, who was a newborn, by their mother. The reporter stated that the sibling was born at a local hospital, was identified as substance affected, was being monitored for neonatal abstinence syndrome and would not be discharged for at least five days. The mother was reported to use marijuana, methamphetamine and heroin until she entered supportive services on February 21, 2022. The hospital was monitoring the sibling because of the mother's use of prescription medication. The mother's use at that time was unknown to the reporter because the mother refused to answer those questions. The reporter had concerns of domestic violence between the mother and the child's father, but they did not know the father's identity or if the parents were still in a relationship. The reporter said that the father attempted to call the mother while at the hospital, but she declined his phone calls. The reporter had no further information about these concerns.

The CPS caseworker spoke to staff at the birthing hospital, who indicated no concerns for the mother's ability to parent. The mother told staff that the father previously perpetrated domestic violence toward her.

The CPS caseworker had initial contact with the mother and the children at the local hospital on April 30, 2022. The mother said she planned to return to services with the sibling when they were ready for discharge. She reported to using methamphetamine and heroin prior to starting services on January 25, 2022. She planned to move in with the relative when she completed these services.

The mother declined to identify the fathers of either of the children and she had no plans to include them in their lives. She recounted one incident of domestic violence perpetrated by the sibling's father when the child was 5 months old. The mother said that the father went to hit her and ended up hitting the child, causing a bruise to their face. There was no further documentation about this alleged injury. The mother said that the fathers were actively using drugs and were aggressive. The mother showed the caseworker a picture of the sibling's father, who had been arrested but their name was not documented in the CPS assessment.

The CPS caseworker spoke to a service provider on May 4, 2022. The mother was reported to be doing well.

The CPS caseworker spoke to the relative on May 5, 2022, who expressed they were a positive support and were aware of indicators when the mother was under the influence.

The allegations of threat of harm to the child, who was 1 year old, and the sibling, who was a newborn, were coded unfounded. There was no evidence supporting that the mother was a threat of harm to the children. She disclosed historical information about the children's fathers and concerns for their behaviors but there was no evidence she allowed them into the children's lives.

Date of report: April 11, 2021

Assignment decision: Closed at Screening

Allegation(s): Not Applicable

Disposition(s): Not Applicable

ODHS received a report on April 11, 2021, with concerns for the child, who was a newborn, in the care of their mother. The reporter stated that the mother used marijuana throughout her pregnancy and used heroin during the first two months of pregnancy before entering supportive services. Drug testing at the delivery hospital for the mother and child were positive for THC only. The mother and newborn child lived with the relative, who was present at the

hospital for support. The mother did not identify a father to the child while at the hospital. There was no plan of care completed at the hospital, but the mother did not report any needs to support the care of the child.

The report was closed at screening as it was not a report of abuse.

Concerns regarding actions taken or not taken

The CIRT acknowledged the challenges the CPS workforce had on this case for locating the mother and gathering quality information about the reported allegations throughout the case history. Engagement challenges with parents are a common theme in cases reviewed as CIRTs, and child welfare practice in general. When parents exhibit this behavior, it does not preclude ODHS' responsibility to gather information about the allegations of abuse. Strategies to gather information in the absence of parent engagement such as contacting a breadth of collaterals for information, collaboration with community providers and internal partners such as ODHS Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP) and Recovery Support Teams to locate families and complete CPS assessment activities, are paramount to understanding child safety.

Additionally, the case history spanned three neighboring districts. Collaboration across county/district lines was identified as an opportunity for improvement, because it could have potentially helped ODHS better understand the family circumstances.

In the report dated December 23, 2023, which was coded unable to locate, there was evidence of some collateral information integrated into the CPS assessment, though the CIRT believed that additional collaterals could have been pursued for further information about the allegations. In the report dated July 24, 2024, there was a single contact with the family, which was well-documented but there was a need for further information gathering from other collateral sources. The relative in this case expressed being a safety net for the children when the mother was "not doing well," per their report. However, it appeared that there was an over-reliance on this individual, who was not forthcoming with information about the mother's behavior. Additional efforts to gather more information from different sources may have

resulted in a better understanding about the family condition and the mother's parenting behavior.

Further, there were areas for improvement in understanding how the mother's substance use impacted their parenting behaviors. Substance use is the most prevalent risk factor in cases reviewed as CIRTs and there have been many initiatives to address this gap. This case history demonstrated that the workforce needs enhanced training and supports for assessing child safety when there are concerns for substance use and providing support to parents who struggle with substance use.

Recommendations for improvement

The CIRT recognizes that the workforce challenges described were directly addressed with the development of the "Unable to Locate" guide in May 2024, which provides standardized steps and resources for locating parents, documenting outreach, and escalating persistent location barriers. The case history reviewed in this case was prior to the implementation of this guide, and the CIRT did not recommend further action for this improvement opportunity.

Additionally, the Child Safety, Family Preservation and Reunification programs are actively working on improving guidance for safety decision-making as part of the ODHS Safety Initiative[1]. This effort includes the nuanced aspect of ensuring child safety while honoring and promoting natural family supports. This multifaceted effort is expected to continue through the end of 2026. This work addresses the improvement opportunities from this case and is supported by the CIRT.

[1] https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/agency/pages/cw-safety-initiatives.aspx

The need for improved collateral contacts have been observed in past CIRTs. Child Safety program is currently strategizing how to reinforce and assure quality collateral contacts in every case as part of a current CIRT recommendation. The recommendation called for a statewide training on the topic of collateral contacts offered to all CPS direct-service staff. This is a scheduled topic for the Fall CPS quarterly training, offered in three separate sessions in November, 2025. Additionally, Child Safety Program has added this concept, and further support for cross-county collaboration to their initiative of the Oregon Safety Model workgroup. This is a larger-scope plan to improve support provided to the CPS workforce through training, coaching and documentation analysis. The CIRT supports this initiative, which will be presented to the executive leadership team by April, 2026 and implemented by the end of 2026 if feasible.

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As mentioned, understanding parental substance use and its impact on child safety remains a significant challenge for the child welfare workforce. SUD (substance use disorder) training was previously paused but the mandated SUD training modules are now available to all child welfare staff. The CIRT recommends that local leadership in partnership with the Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator establish a specific completion date for all staff to finish the modules. Completion of these modules is a prerequisite for the statewide implementation of the Early Engagement framework[2] in 2026. Additionally, local leadership and the Substance

[2] https://www.cffutures.org/files/CFFComprehensiveFramework.pdf

Abuse Prevention Coordinator will explore any barriers to collaboration with the Recovery Support Team and develop targeted strategies for addressing any gaps found. This effort will begin by end of March 2026, and any strategies for improvement will be identified by end of May 2026.

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