



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*State Senate Republican Caucus*  
*State House, Boston, MA 02133-1054*

December 20, 2013

State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump  
Office of the State Auditor  
State House Room 230  
Boston, MA 02133

Inspector General Glenn A. Cunha  
John W. McCormack State Office Building  
One Ashburton Place, Room 1311  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Auditor Bump and Inspector General Cunha:

Tuesday, Commissioner Olga Roche of the Department of Children and Families terminated the employment of a social worker and supervisor connected in the case of Jeremiah Oliver. She specifically cited the failure of these two employees to follow DCF policies and procedures. The five year old child, whose whereabouts have been unknown to the DCF for several months, his siblings, and mother were receiving services from the Department since 2011.

On December 19, the Commissioner announced that the DCF will conduct its own internal review into as many as 40,000 cases. Concerns about social worker case loads, coupled with administrative failings in overseeing the Oliver family are alarming and warrant independent review and examination. The Olivers were receiving state supervision by the DCF since September 2011 and yet, despite the DCF's obligations and procedures, it was a seven year old child that ultimately came forward to report abuse to law enforcement authorities.

The Department's mandate requires it to intervene and protect the right of children to have sound health and normal physical and mental development. First and foremost among its service principles is to ensure the safety of children. Whether or not the DCF is maintaining meaningful contact with each child within its auspices should be a paramount concern to all of us.

We request and encourage a full review and examination independently or in concert, of the DCF's practices and procedures so that we can prevent any other similar abuse from occurring.

To that end, we request that the review:

- collect as much information as possible to assess the risk and safety issues for children in the system;
- determine how many children have not had direct, monthly, contact with a DCF case worker;
- determine the adequacy of the 110 CMR 6.00 and other pertinent regulations relative to case review procedures for children in foster care and non-foster care settings;
- determine the adherence to standards in comprehensive assessments and family service plans;
- determine the Department's adherence to procedures established under 110 CMR 13.00 for the Case Investigation Unit;
- assess the number of service plans initiated as a result of a 51A child abuse or neglect filing or court order;

- collect information as to the standard number of cases assigned to social workers and the average number of children assigned to social workers;
- determine if there has been public access to appropriately redacted reports of the Department's Case Investigation Unit;
- determine if case management activities and other services provided to children and families were adequate and appropriately adhered with DCF policies and regulations;
- refer any relevant finding of a criminal nature to the Attorney General;
- provide recommendations that may improve the DCF's policy, regulations, training, or contracted services; and
- provide procedural recommendations, that when adhered to, will require that DCF acts in a manner that is accountable and open to oversight.

Expressions of grave concern for the health and safety of Jeremiah Oliver have been echoed across the Commonwealth. Increasingly, as our understanding of the department's failings to carry out its mandate expands, there are further growing concerns for all other children in the DCF system.

The nature and scope of these developing circumstances demand independent investigations. Only through well-developed inquiry can we determine how to best help the staff and management of DCF to protect the lives of children. We would be pleased to meet with you, at your earliest convenience, to discuss this request further.

Sincerely,



Bruce E. Tarr  
State Senator



Donald F. Humason Jr.  
State Senator



Robert L. Hedlund  
State Senator



Richard J. Ross  
State Senator

Cc: His Excellency Deval L. Patrick  
The Honorable Senate President Therese Murray