



# INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Lori Torres, Inspector General

OFFICE: INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES (DCS)  
TITLE: DCS CASEWORKER FALSIFYING RECORDS  
CASE ID: 2018-10-0275  
DATE: February 10, 2020

*Inspector General Staff Attorney Kelly Elliott, after an investigation by Special Agent Michael Lepper, reports as follows:*

The Indiana General Assembly charged the Office of Inspector General (OIG) with addressing fraud, waste, abuse and wrongdoing in the executive branch of state government. I.C. § 4-2-7-2(b). The OIG also investigates criminal activity and ethics violations by state workers. I.C. § 4-2-7-3.

On October 2, 2018, the OIG received a complaint from the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) alleging that former DCS Family Case Manager (FCM) Melisa Casteel falsified entries made in internal agency records and in reports Casteel submitted to the court regarding visits with children on her caseload. DCS terminated Casteel on September 3, 2018. OIG Special Agent Michael Lepper conducted an investigation into this matter.

DCS maintains a Child Welfare Policy Manual (Manual). Chapter 8, Section 10 of the Manual outlines the minimum contact a DCS FCM must make with a child under the agency's care and supervision receiving out-of-home services.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the Manual requires the FCM to have monthly face-to-face contact with the child, including time alone with the child, regardless of the child's

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<sup>1</sup> The complaint alleged that Casteel's misconduct occurred from January through August of 2018 and with children receiving out-of-home services. As such, the IG report references Version 9 of Chapter 8, Section 10, which was effective from November 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018.

placement type. The Manual also requires the FCM to complete the Face-to-Face Contact form<sup>2</sup> at least monthly. The Manual requires the FCM to photograph the child at each face-to-face contact. The Manual further states that “[f]ollowing each face-to-face contact with the child . . . the FCM will: 1. Clearly and accurately document in MaGIK the face-to-face contact; . . . photographs taken; [and] the completed Face-to-Face Contact (SF53557) form; . . . within three (3) business days.” MaGIK, the Management Gateway for Indiana’s Kids, is DCS’s electronic case management system.

Special Agent Lepper learned that MaGIK automatically generates a notice to a FCM’s supervisor if that FCM has not visited a child in a required period. FCM supervisors have found that entries FCMs make in MaGIK that are brief and give no required details are often signs of false reports. Special Agent Lepper learned that FCMs will sometimes make what is known as a “placeholder entry” in MaGIK that is very brief and says something to the effect of “more information will be uploaded soon.” This “placeholder entry” prevents the MaGIK system from automatically generating a notice to the FCM’s supervisor if the FCM has not visited a child within a required period.

Special Agent Lepper learned that Casteel served as an FCM in the Allen County local DCS office. Casteel’s caseload consisted of cases related to ongoing in-home/out-of-home services. Special Agent Lepper interviewed Casteel’s FCM supervisor (Supervisor). The Supervisor stated that when he transitioned into the supervisor position at the Allen County local DCS office, he reviewed entries Casteel and all other FCMs under his supervision made in MaGIK. The Supervisor explained that during his review of Casteel’s MaGIK entries, he noticed several missing entries and some entries with very little information. After the Supervisor’s identification of Casteel’s questionable MaGIK entries, the

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<sup>2</sup> The Face-to-Face Contact form, State Form 53557, outlines various matters that a FCM should address with every child, parent, guardian, custodian and/or resource parent at each monthly face-to-face contact. The form addresses matters relating to safety, stability, well-being, permanency and case plan goals.

local DCS office conducted an internal investigation into the matter. DCS concluded that Casteel falsified several MaGIK entries as it related to face-to-face visits with children on her caseload.

Special Agent Lepper reviewed the alleged falsified MaGIK entries identified by DCS's internal investigation. Special Agent Lepper also reviewed court reports related to the alleged falsified visits with the children. He conducted interviews with other DCS employees and the caregivers of all the children in question. Additionally, he reviewed Casteel's state-issued phone for photograph verification of visits with the children. He also reviewed Casteel's paper case file for each child, as well as additional documentation uploaded to MaGIK for each child.

Based on his review, Special Agent Lepper found that Casteel falsified entries made in MaGIK and/or court reports as the entries related to face-to-face visits with twelve children who were receiving out-of-home services. For each of the falsified entries made in MaGIK, Special Agent Lepper found that the MaGIK entries contained limited information. He found no photos of the twelve children on Casteel's state-issued smartphone or uploaded into MaGIK for any dates. He also did not find photos of any of the twelve children in the paper case file that Casteel maintained for each child. Upon review of Casteel's paper case files and documentation uploaded into MaGIK, Special Agent Lepper found that Casteel did not complete the required Face-to-Face Contact form for any of the questionable visits. Furthermore, Special Agent Lepper interviewed the caregivers for each child and each caregiver verified that the alleged visit(s) with the child/children did not occur.

Special Agent Lepper interviewed Casteel regarding the questionable entries she made in MaGIK and/or in court reports. Casteel stated that prior to her termination from DCS, she maintained a caseload of thirty-nine children.<sup>3</sup> She stated that sometimes she intentionally entered an incorrect date in MaGIK

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<sup>3</sup> During Casteel's employment with DCS, I.C. § 31-25-2-5 stated FCMs could maintain caseloads with no more than "(1) twelve (12) active cases relating to initial assessments, including investigations of an allegation of child abuse or neglect; or (2) seventeen (17) children monitored and supervised in active cases relating to ongoing services." In 2019, the General Assembly amended I.C. § 31-25-2-5 to modify the number of children or families a FCM may maintain on his/her caseload.

to keep the system from sending an alert to her supervisor that she had not made a visit in the last month. Casteel repeatedly stated that the MaGIK entries for the visits may be wrong, but she saw the children on her caseload every month. She admitted that a few of the visits entered into MaGIK and/or court reports were incorrect. She stated she did not normally take photographs of the children at a visit but always completed the Face-to-Face Contact forms for her visits. She noted that she did not upload the Face-to-Face Contact forms in MaGIK but maintained a hard copy of the completed forms. She explained that after her termination, she handed all of her Face-to-Face Contact forms to the Local Office Director (LOD) for the Allen County local DCS office.

Special Agent Lepper interviewed the LOD, who stated that she also reviewed Casteel's paper case files and MaGIK entries for the twelve children. She stated she found only two Face-to-Face Contact forms for any of the twelve children for any dates; however, the two forms the LOD found were not for dates of visits that Casteel reported in MaGIK and/or court reports.

The OIG submitted the results of this investigation to the Allen County Prosecutor's Office. On January 31, 2020, the Allen County Prosecutor's Office charged Casteel with five counts of Falsifying Child Abuse or Neglect Information or Records, a class A misdemeanor, three counts of Obstruction of Justice, a Level 6 Felony, and one count of Official Misconduct, a Level 6 Felony, Cause Number 02D04-2001-F6-000152. Accordingly, this investigation is closed.

Dated: February 10, 2020

APPROVED BY:



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Lori Torres, Inspector General