



# INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Lori Torres, Inspector General

OFFICE: INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES (DCS)  
TITLE: DCS CASEWORKER FALSIFICATION OF RECORDS  
CASE ID: 2019-04-0106  
DATE: July 13, 2020

*Inspector General Staff Attorney Kelly Elliott, after an investigation by Special Agent Charles Coffin, 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.

## **I. Complaint**

On April 15, 2019, the OIG received a complaint alleging that a former Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) Family Case Manager (Employee) falsified information relating to visits with children on her caseload. DCS conducted an internal investigation into the matter and determined that the Employee submitted false information relating to visits with three children on her caseload. Based on these findings, DCS terminated the Employee for failing to adhere to DCS policies.

OIG Special Agent Charles Coffin conducted an investigation into this matter. Through the course of his investigation, Special Agent Coffin interviewed the Employee and other DCS employees. Special Agent Coffin also reviewed documentation received from DCS, including their internal investigative report, agency policies and the Employee's personnel files. He also reviewed

records in the Management Gateway for Indiana Kids (MaGIK) system, DCS's electronic case management system.

## **II. DCS Policies**

DCS maintains a Child Welfare Policy Manual (Manual). Chapter 7, Section 3 of the Manual outlines the minimum amount of contact that DCS is to have with children receiving in-home services. The Manual states that the FCM will have monthly face-to-face contact with every child under DCS care and supervision who is identified as "at imminent risk of placement."<sup>1</sup> Face-to-face contact must include time spent alone with the child, and a photograph of the child must be taken during each face-to-face contact. Following each face-to-face contact with the child, the FCM is to document the contact in MaGIK.

## **III. OIG Investigation**

Special Agent Coffin learned that the Employee served as an FCM in Marion County. In 2019, DCS filed a Child in Need of Service (CHINS) Petition involving three children receiving in-home services. DCS assigned the pending CHINS matter to the Employee. The Employee later emailed her supervisor and recommended that DCS dismiss the CHINS Petition in the matter. In the email, the Employee listed her reasons for recommending dismissal and provided four dates in which "the children were seen." She also listed two dates on which a Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) was held. The Employee forwarded this email to MaGIK, and this created an "Email Note" entry in MaGIK for the CHINS matter.

The Employee later emailed her supervisor and asked her to review an *unsigned* affidavit requesting dismissal of the CHINS Petition in the matter. In the affidavit, the Employee listed five

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 7, Section 1, "Child at Imminent Risk of Removal," (Version 4, effective from July 1, 2014 through August 31, 2019), states, in part, "The Family Case Manager will: 1. Make an initial determination that a child is at imminent risk for removal with a substantiation of abuse or neglect by DCS as documented by an approved substantiated Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF113)."

dates in which “the children were seen” and one date in which a CFTM was held. The draft affidavit closed with the following affirmation: “I, [the Employee], being an adult over the age of 18 years, being of sound mind and having personal knowledge of the aforementioned facts, swear or affirm, under the penalties of perjury that the above representations are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.”

Special Agent Coffin reviewed records in MaGIK relating to the CHINS matter. He found that the Employee visited the two youngest children on one date, the oldest child on a second date, and all three children on a third date. Altogether, the Employee visited each of the three children only twice. There were no MaGIK entries in the CHINS matter to indicate that the Employee or any other DCS caseworker conducted a face-to-face visit with any of the children on two of the dates listed in the Employee’s email to her supervisor and in the unsigned affidavit. Special Agent Coffin also found that neither the Employee nor any other DCS caseworker held a CFTM in the CHINS matter on the date listed in the unsigned affidavit.

Special Agent Coffin interviewed the Employee. The Employee stated she was unaware she initially had the CHINS matter because it was assigned to her while she was on vacation. The Employee explained that she listed the dates DCS saw the three children in the CHINS matter based on what she reviewed in MaGIK for the case. She indicated that she did not state that “she” saw the children for all the dates she listed. The Employee stated she never intentionally made a false entry in MaGIK or a court report.

Special Agent Coffin learned that after the Employee’s termination, DCS reassigned the CHINS matter to a new FCM. The new FCM visited the children and family and had no safety concerns. DCS later requested and received dismissal of the CHINS Petition based on the new FCM’s observations and recommendation.

Special Agent Coffin reviewed the Employee's personnel file for 2017 and 2018. He found that DCS had counseled the Employee previously on failing to meet deadlines and not visiting children on her caseload as required by DCS policy. The Employee was on a Work Improvement Plan to address such concerns at the time of her termination.

Special Agent Coffin did not find evidence that the Employee submitted false information relating to visits with the children or a CFTM in any reports submitted to the court. Special Agent Coffin also investigated allegations that the Employee falsified face-to-face visits with children in two other CHINS matters; however, Special Agent Coffin found insufficient evidence to substantiate such claims.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The OIG discussed the results of this investigation with the Marion County Prosecutor's Office. On June 11, 2020, the Marion County Prosecutor's Office notified the OIG that their office was declining to prosecute the matter because there was insufficient evidence to move forward on any criminal charges against the Employee. Further, Special Agent Coffin found no evidence to indicate that the Employee was engaged in work other than the performance of her official state duties during working hours as it relates to the falsified visits and the CFTM. As such, the OIG found insufficient evidence to substantiate a ghost employment violation under the Code of Ethics against the Employee. Accordingly, the OIG is closing this case for insufficient cause.

Dated: July 13, 2020

APPROVED BY:



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Lori Torres, Inspector General