



INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

David Cook, Inspector General

OFFICE: INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES (DCS)

TITLE: DCS CASEWORKER FALSIFICATION OF RECORDS

CASE ID: 2020-02-0050

DATE: October 1, 2021

Indiana Office of Inspector General Staff Attorney Lyubov Gore, after an investigation by Inspector General Special Agent Chuck Coffin, reports as follows:

The Indiana General Assembly charged the Office of the Indiana Inspector General (OIG) with addressing fraud, waste, abuse and wrongdoing in the executive branch agencies of state government. Ind. Code §4-2-7-2(b). The OIG also investigates allegations of criminal activity and Code of Ethics (Code) ¹ violations within state government. Ind. Code §4-2-7-3. The OIG may recommend policies and carry out other activities designed to deter, detect and eradicate fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement and misconduct in state government. Ind. Code §4-2-7-3(2).

I. COMPLAINT AND BACKGROUND

On February 12, 2020, the OIG received a complaint from the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) regarding Elizabeth Funk, a former Bartholomew County DCS Family Case Manager (FCM). According to the complaint, Funk falsified case notes regarding child welfare assessments in DCS's Case Management Database, Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids

¹ The Code is found in Ind. Code 4-2-6 and 42 IAC 1.

(MaGIK). The complaint specified that, in approximately four of her assigned cases, Funk documented conversations in MaGIK with parents and grandparents, which never took place.

DCS discovered the issues in January of 2020 and conducted an internal investigation into the matter. At that time, Funk's supervisor had returned a completed child welfare assessment to Funk and counseled her on it because the assessment was missing information, contained errors and lacked evidence that Funk had made contact with the family (Family 1). The investigation revealed that a DCS supervisor had previously counseled Funk on the same issues in prior assessments. DCS subsequently spoke with the guardians in four of Funk's assigned cases, with whom Funk had documented having contact as part of her assessments. The guardians indicated that Funk had not had contact with them, contrary to Funk's documentation of such contact in MaGIK.

On February 3, 2020, DCS held a pre-deprivation hearing with Funk and confronted her with the evidence gathered in the investigation. DCS terminated Funk's employment for behavior that was "unacceptable, in violation of Child Welfare Policies, DCS Administrative Policies, and [t]he Indiana State Personnel Standardized Policies." The OIG opened an investigation to determine whether Funk had committed violations of the Criminal Code or Code of Ethics.

II. OIG INVESTIGATION

OIG Special Agent Chuck Coffin investigated the matter. Special Agent Coffin reviewed DCS's policies; DCS's investigative records; Funk's DCS employment history and disciplinary records; Funk's MaGIK files and assessment reports; Funk's time reporting records, travel vouchers and security badge entry records; and Funk's credit union account records. Special Agent Coffin obtained and reviewed Funk's state-issued smartphone and laptop for further review. As part of his investigation, Special Agent Coffin also interviewed Funk's DCS supervisors, DCS

coworkers and the guardians with whom DCS discovered that Funk had not made contact as she had documented in MaGIK.

OIG Special Agent Coffin learned that Funk had served as a DCS FCM in Bartholomew County since May 20, 2019, and that Funk had completed the standard FCM and State Ethics Commission trainings, which include guidance on DCS's Code of Conduct and DCS's Child Welfare Policies. Chapter 4, Section 4 of DCS's Child Welfare Policy² states, in relevant part, that DCS FCMs are required to conduct interviews with the parent, guardian or custodian and other identified witnesses during all child abuse and/or neglect assessments.

Special Agent Coffin spoke to the mother in Family 1, whose case Funk was assigned to assess due to allegations of child neglect. Funk had documented having a face-to-face meeting at the mother's home on January 6, 2020. Funk did not claim any travel expenditures for this visit. After the contact, Funk determined that the allegations of neglect had been substantiated. The mother informed Special Agent Coffin that no contact took place with Funk on January 6, 2020. Further, two family members from Family 1 submitted signed affidavits to DCS affirming that no such contact took place. Based on this interview and DCS's documentation, Special Agent Coffin approximated that Funk would have spent 140 minutes of state work time had she fully completed Family 1's assessment, which Funk falsified.

Special Agent Coffin spoke to the father in Family 2, whose case Funk was assigned to assess due to allegations of child neglect. Funk had documented having a face-to-face meeting at the father's home on January 6, 2020. Funk did not claim any travel expenditures for this visit. After the contact, Funk determined that the allegations of neglect had been unsubstantiated. The father informed Special Agent Coffin that no contact took place with Funk on that date. Further,

² Version 4, effective January 1, 2012.

the father had spoken with another family member who corroborated that he had never spoken with anyone from DCS, including Funk. Based on this interview and DCS's documentation, Special Agent Coffin approximated that Funk would have spent 70 minutes of state work time had she fully completed Family 2's assessment, which Funk falsified.

Special Agent Coffin attempted to contact the guardians in Family 3, whose case Funk was assigned to assess due to allegations of child neglect and physical abuse. Funk had documented having a face-to-face contact with the mother on December 20, 2019. Funk did not claim any travel expenditures for this visit. After the contact, Funk determined that the allegations of neglect had been unsubstantiated. Although Special Agent Coffin was unable to speak with the mother, the mother had previously told DCS that she had not had face-to-face contact with Funk. Based on DCS's documentation, Special Agent Coffin approximated that Funk would have spent approximately 80 minutes of state work time had she fully completed Family 3's assessment, which Funk falsified.

Special Agent Coffin spoke to the mother in Family 4, whose case Funk was assigned to assess due to allegations of child neglect. Funk had documented having face-to-face contacts with the mother on October 9 and October 29, 2019. Funk did not claim any travel expenditures for this visit. After the contact, Funk determined that the allegations of neglect had been unsubstantiated. The mother informed Special Agent Coffin that she never had any face-to-face meetings with Funk. Based on this interview and DCS's documentation, Special Agent Coffin approximated that Funk would have spent approximately 80 minutes of state work time had she fully completed Family 4's assessment, which Funk falsified.

During the course of his investigation, Special Agent Coffin learned that, on December 20, 2019, Funk had claimed a travel reimbursement from the State for a trip she had allegedly made

to and from the DCS office and Creekside Elementary School in Franklin. Special Agent Coffin contacted the school and verified through the school's records and the Principal of Creekside Elementary School that there were no records of Funk conducting a visit to the school for the entirety of the 2019-2020 school year. Documents showed that the State reimbursed Funk \$16.86 in state funds for this claimed travel expense.

Special Agent Coffin conducted an interview with Funk regarding her assigned cases and the travel reimbursement. Funk maintained that she did not recall any of the DCS cases or families whom she was assigned to assess. Funk claimed that she had a heavy caseload during that time and that it was not uncommon to be under pressure from DCS supervisors to close cases. With respect to the travel reimbursement, Funk denied that she had any clients in Franklin for whom she would have traveled to Creekside Elementary School.

Based on his investigation, Special Agent Coffin concluded that Funk had falsely documented in MaGIK that she had contacted four of the families in her assigned caseload. Funk did so during state-working hours and collected state pay for doing so. Special Agent Coffin further concluded that Funk had claimed reimbursement for travel expenses from the State for a trip that she never made.

IV. CONCLUSION

The OIG submitted the results of this investigation to the Bartholomew County Prosecutor's Office. On September 27, 2021, the Bartholomew County Prosecutor's Office charged Funk with Ghost Employment, as a Level 6 felony under Ind. Code § 35-44.1-1-3(D); three counts of Official Misconduct, as a Level 6 felony under Ind. Code § 35-44.1-1-1(1); Knowingly Falsifying Records or Interfering with an Investigation/Obstruction of a Child Abuse Assessment, as a Class A Misdemeanor under Ind. Code § 31-33-22-2(b)(1); and with Theft, as a

Class A Misdemeanor under Ind. Code § 35-43-4-2(A). Accordingly, this investigation is closed.

Dated: October 1, 2021

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Cook". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

David Cook, Inspector General