

Statement from the Cumberland County Social Services Board

October 8, 2010

A major goal of the Department of Social Services is protecting children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. As part of that goal, Children's Services investigates and evaluates reports of child abuse, neglect and exploitation; cooperates with law enforcement agencies; and initiates court action when necessary.

The Board of Social Services has reviewed in detail the actions of the director and staff involved in the Shaniya Davis child fatality.

There was no delay in providing records. The Spring Lake office was contacted by the FPD on November 10, 2009. Records were reviewed and read onsite, discussed with supervisor and notes were taken by FPD on November 10, 2009. The FPD chose not to take a copy of the records with them. DSS considered this an emergency situation and in order to protect a missing child provided information to FPD prior to any order taking effect. The FPD elected to obtain orders though they were not needed and DSS complied with those orders. We have concluded that the agency worked diligently with the Fayetteville Police Department to provide all information relevant to this child fatality in a timely manner.

After receiving a letter from the DA dated November 17, 2009 that requested the agency deny media requests concerning disclosure in a child fatality for Shaniya Davis, on November 23, 2009, the Director instructed staff not to communicate by email any information related to this case, print any emails related to the case, file them in the official record, and to delete the emails from their individual personal computers. All emails have been captured in electronic form and provided to the SBI.

The Director unequivocally denies that she made any statements related to anyone breaking into the DSS building. This incident never occurred.

Finally, over the last year DSS has been and is continuing to address issues related to Children's Services. Along those lines the DSS Director is meeting regularly with the Police Chief to discuss issues and address concerns. Also, reforms have been made in several areas of Children's Services, and we are considering hiring an outside consultant to review those changes and provide us with an objective evaluation.

We are committed to protecting our community's children and will continue to look for ways to improve how we do that important job.

The DSS Board asked pointed questions of the Director today. We feel that the Director has worked diligently to carry out her responsibilities as mandated by law and we support her decisions.

We also want to thank the staff of 650 employees for their dedicated work and commitment to the citizens Cumberland County.