

Department of Children's Services

October 30, 2017

Dear xxxxxxxx,

As a parent myself, I see your determination to do everything you can for your child.

There's nothing fiercer, more passionate, than a mother set on protecting the child she loves. When we believe that our babies have been harmed, our instincts drive us to make it all better. We hug them. We stroke their hair. We rush them to the doctor when we have to, and we still worry when we get them back home.

As the Commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, I have thousands of abused and neglected children in my care.

I have done this work for over 40 years, and, quite frankly, there is little I haven't seen when it comes to the way children can be abused and neglected.

I have carefully read and considered the case notes involving your son, plus your communications to our staff members, as well as, discussed the case with all involved staff.

Cases involving young children are especially difficult to investigate. We have a duty to find the facts as best we can, a duty that we must balance with an equally important obligation not to cause any further harm. This is especially true in cases involving large numbers of children. We need to be protective, but we also must guard against spreading undue trauma and fear.

We coordinate our responses to serious cases with child advocacy centers and law enforcement. The child advocates have special training and expertise in interviewing and examining children, and if their interactions with children and parents prompt serious concern, they can refer them to DCS if further services are needed.

The law requires DCS to make our decisions based on the evidence we find.

Often that evidence can lead to a substantiation of abuse or neglect. Sometimes that evidence can lead to a criminal charge and a conviction for a perpetrator. It all relies on evidence, uncovered during forensic interviews, witnesses' statements, medical examinations or police investigations -- regardless of what our intuition or suspicions may be trying to tell us.

We do not have enough information that allows us to pursue any further action on the allegations involving your son. My review of the files indicates that DCS worked hard and carefully on this case and did so to the best of its ability.

I understand your concerns. I truly do. Thank you very much for contacting us.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Hemmaich

Bonnie Hommrich Commissioner

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