

According to NC General Statute 7B-2902, the Caldwell County Department of Social Services is allowed to release certain information in cases when there is a child fatality and criminal charges have been filed. The following statement contains the facts that now can be released. By law, Caldwell County DSS can make no further statements to the public or answer questions regarding the case. Also as required by law, the case of Zahra Baker will be reviewed by the North Carolina Child Fatality Review Team. The team is made up of local and state representatives from the medical community, law enforcement, prevention specialist, DSS and a citizen at large representative.

Summary of Services on Zahra Baker:

On January 29, 2010, Caldwell County Social Services received a Child Protective Services (CPS) report regarding Zahra Baker. Prior to this report, the department had no history with Zahra Baker.

The report included allegations of improper discipline, improper care and injurious environment. The report was initially assessed at the family residence on February 1, 2010, and included interviews with the father, stepmother and the child.

On February 4, 2010, an additional report was received containing the same allegations as in the January 29, 2010 report. A home visit was made with the family on February 4, 2010 to discuss the additional information received. Interviews were conducted with the father, stepmother, child, and a neighborhood friend of the family on this same date. During the course of this assessment, the department obtained an additional statement from a family member confirming the father, stepmother and child's statements. There were no other minor children residing in the household.

The family assessment for both the January 29 and February 4 report were completed and the case was closed on February 23, 2010 with no evidence of maltreatment or child safety issues.

On May 28, 2010, Caldwell County Social Services received a report regarding Zahra Baker. The report included allegations of improper discipline and improper care. The report was initially assessed at the family residence on May 28, 2010 and included joint interviews with the stepmother and child as well as separate interviews. The father was interviewed on June 21, 2010. The department obtained statements from a family member and two additional individuals were interviewed during the course of the assessment. The family assessment was completed and the case was closed on June 23, 2010 with no evidence of maltreatment or child safety issues.

On July 12, 2010, Caldwell County Social Services received a report regarding Zahra Baker. The report included allegations of improper discipline and injurious environment. Caldwell County Social Services attempted to locate the family on July 12, 2010 and again on July 13, 2010. These attempts were unsuccessful and the department learned that the family had moved to Catawba County. The department sent a request to Catawba County Social Services in an

attempt to locate the family and initiate the report. Catawba County Social Services was able to establish that the family was residing in their county. Catawba County Social Services accepted this report as a transfer case on July 13, 2010 and finished conducting the assessment.

This was the last contact Caldwell County Social Services had with the Baker family until we learned on October 11, 2010 that Zahra Baker was missing from the home. Throughout the process of this case we have cooperated with law enforcement and will continue to assist in any manner we can to bring this case to its proper resolution.