

washingtonpost.com

Big Backlog of Abuse, Neglect Cases Is Cut

Advertisement

By Petula Dvorak
Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, December 19, 2008; B02

Major strides in the past few months have righted the listing D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, putting it back on the path to quality reform, officials said yesterday.

The city's social workers reduced the backlog of abuse and neglect cases from an overwhelming 1,750 this summer to 92 as of yesterday, [Mayor Adrian M. Fenty \(D\)](#) said at a news conference.

"We are glad that we can represent to the city that we have gotten out from under the huge backlog," Fenty said.

When CFSA was struggling this summer after [Banita Jacks](#)'s four daughters were found dead in their home and the agency was flooded with child abuse reports, the agency faced a possible federal takeover. Agency watchdogs who feared that years of steady improvements were being lost in a matter of months filed a request for a contempt order.

It was a situation "where reform not only stalled, but it was moving backward," said Sara Bartosz, senior attorney with Children's Rights, the group that has been in litigation with the agency for nearly two decades.

But in October, the request was put aside and the motion put on hold. The agency hammered out an agreement to meet 11 goals, ranging from recruitment to finding more foster homes for children to clearing cases.

Officials were required to cut the backlog to 100 by Dec. 31. CFSA has also hired 40 social workers, moved 70 social workers into community-based offices, upgraded its hotline and contracted with an agency to find adoptive homes for 25 children ready for a new family, Fenty said.

The improvements are a case of "promises made, promises kept," said D.C. Attorney General [Peter Nickles](#). He said social workers have "one of the most difficult jobs in the city" and cheered them for working hard to clear the backlog.

But some child advocates weren't so quick to praise.

Despite a quick slash of the backlog, "there is no evidence of improvement in the lives of children and families in the District," said Matthew Fraidin, a law professor and child welfare expert at the [University of the District of Columbia](#).

Fraidin is worried that the agency is proclaiming success "based on numbers, not little human beings."



[Post a Comment](#)

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

Ads by Google

[Veritas Backup & Recovery](#)

Try Backup Exec products for free. Download trialware - Official site.

www.Symantec.com/confidenceahead