

Critical analysis of the cases of child protective service failure

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



The New York Times delivered an article, “ An Infant Is Dead, Her Twin Is Injured, and Their Mother is in Police Custody”. This article discussed the case of Tina Moussighi Torabi and her five children. Ms. Torabi is a single mother who has five children under the age of six-years old. One year ago, Child services visited Ms. Torabi’s house in Queens, New York to check on her twins who were born with opioids in their system. Last week, the police showed up to the same house and had to deal with a much more serious situation. Ms. Torabi’s, one-year old Elaina was found dead with signs of trauma as well as her twin brother was found close to death and in critical condition. Tina was taken into custody and the administration of children services removed the three older siblings.

The death of Elaina raised many concerns regarding social workers who had gone to the home of the children a year ago and may have missed something. The child welfare agency has been monitored closely since December 2016. The reason the child welfare agency was being watched so closely was because state officials asked for close monitoring after a series of child deaths which uncovered botched investigations to remove children from their home whom were in danger. Child welfare workers did in fact visit Ms. Torabi a few times since her twins were born and had opioids in their blood. After the initial visit they did try to call and tried to continue helping her after.

The Torabi’s marriage was troubled and they had been divorced for over a year and a half. Witnesses told reporters that Mr. Torabi was not involved in his children’s life and hadn’t been in their home in a long period of time. In

February 2015, Mr. Torabi admitted that he had choked his wife and since then there was an order of protection for Ms. Torabi and her children. Many witnesses said that Ms. Torabi seemed frazzled but not abusive. When she ran out screaming to call 911 because her child was not breathing, a witness said she seemed frantic and looked extremely remorseful about whatever happened moments before. Another witness said, “ She always had a flock of five kids with her and she could never control them”. This witness also states that she never seemed abusive in her eyes rather just exhausted and a mother of five young children.

The New York Times delivered another article, “ Child Welfare Unit Tied to Toddler’s Death Is Understaffed and Poorly Trained”. In January of 2017, it took welfare workers two full days to find a three-year-old since the child welfare workers were understaffed and not trained well. The workers did not know how to search the database that contained the toddlers’ home address. The child, Jaden Jordan was later found unconscious and covered in feces two days after the administration children’s services had gotten an anonymous call regarding abuse. Jaden’s case was another high-profile death involving a child whose family was involved with the child welfare agency. A month before this incident had occurred the city was guided to install a monitor because of the death of Zymere Perkins. Zymere, a six-year old boy died four months before in September after the city’s administration children’s services had numerous opportunities to remove him from his mother and boyfriends’ home.

The same week that child services received a call about Jaden they also received a report about Zamair Coombs. Zamair was found unconscious with bruises all over his body. That same day the child welfare agency removed Zamair's two younger brother from their home. Later on, his mother Zarah was charged with the death of her four-year-old son. Witnesses reported that Zarah did not seem like an abusive mother rather her brother called her a "a great mother". He claimed that if he would have suspected that his sister was doing anything wrong he would have called the police of child services.

The problem with Jaden's case rest with the child service agency. According to a timeline that was released, child services received an anonymous call regarding abuse about Jaden on November 26. Social workers responded within two hours but got nowhere since the address they received was the wrong one. The day after, they returned to the Gravesend neighborhood and tried to find Jaden's family but that was a dead end as well. Two days later, on November 28th the investigators found the correct address only to find that they were too late. The Police were already on the scene after Jaden's mother's boyfriend had called in a report that he had fallen in the shower and was pronounced dead soon after.

Anthony Wells, the president of Social Service Employees Union Local 371, agreed with all media reports that the emergency children's services are understaffed and could use more training. Mr. Wells said that although he would love to report all these cases to the NYPD he doubts that would be beneficial for the success of the NYPD. He also said that in a lot of cases social workers cannot be blamed since they can't decide if the situation is

criminal just like the police can't decide when the removal of a child from his/her parents is necessary.

There are many things common in all four of these cases. One common issue that all these articles present is that the children and families were in the system already. The question that remains is how they became victims if they were in the system and how did it end up being a case that was missed. In the first article, Eliana was under harm since birth and some could say should have been removed immediately if not been checked up numerous times in the course of the year. In the second article, Jaden Jordan was a three-year-old boy whom an abuse report came in and was going to be removed but due to the lack of resources and training Child Protective Services could not save him in time. It took them over two days to find him but by then it was too late. Zymere, was also mentioned in the article, was a six-year-old boy known to child services, and they had many opportunities to remove him but didn't consider it a "priority case". The same article talks about Zamair's case where his two younger siblings were removed since his mother and boyfriend were deemed incapable and we question as to why the four-year-old remained in her custody while the other two younger children didn't.

Many people say and can show examples that child protective services do good for so many and I am not one to argue with that. However, in mid-September more than 14, 000 kids across the state of Texas- one third of those with open CPS cases- had not been seen by investigators between 24-72 hours after the initial report of abuse was called in to child services. This

is happening state wide and not just in Texas. The mandated timeframe in which a call can come in and investigators have to respond is 24- 72 hours.

At any given time, there are over 3, 00 children in the court county child welfare system. Tim Burch who runs the agency in Nevada says, “ the number of fatalities shows a growing need; more services means more money”. We as regular civilians and social workers want to know how we can help. What can we do to help these children that fall through the systems cracks? Experts agree that the most effective thing we can do in order to reduce acts of abuse is to bury the stigma so that those in need of help will get the help they need. Three things we can do as a community is to, one, help encourage people to get help for their own mental health issues. Two, encourage people to get out of domestic violence, intimate- partner violence partner situations. The third and final way is to encourage those who need help to seek it and to benefit from the many systems of help we have. Mr. Burch says that we should all continue being conscientious for these children and to keep making calls if you suspect abuse is happening in their homes.

There are many fingers that we can point and many questions that arise with this situation. Yes, in many cases child protective service are overworked and undertrained. Budgets in the CPS are undeniably tight but when will we accept that children are not just falling through the cracks of the welfare system. These cracks are massive holes and we are hurting too many of the children who fall through them. That being the case, the questions arise as to who’s ultimately to blame? From child protective services point of view, there are many questions that may come from their end such as taking a

child from their biological family is undoubtedly emotionally traumatic but is it better to let a child stay in a critical situation. As well as, are we placing too much significance on family preservation and parental rights even when it's the child at risk and the child who's the one who's being violated? There is no definite solution as well as no real answers to these questions. Yes, many children are falling through the cracks of child services but on the other hand many children each year are benefiting from their services. Can more be saved? That's an answer only child services can decide. Hopefully, with the right training and resources we will see great results on their part.