



Fenty Announces Child Protective Services Reforms

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WASHINGTON -- On Friday, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty announced reforms to strengthen the city's child protective services system.

The reforms include a rule that requires social workers to keep investigations open until they have identified and located children who may be at risk.

In addition, child abuse hot line workers and supervisors have received additional training to improve their ability to gather information on possible abuse and neglect cases.

The Child and Family Services Agency is developing a Web site to train people who are required to report suspected abuse.

The agency also has secured 20 additional cars to help child welfare workers investigate their cases.

The CFSA came under fire after the bodies of four dead girls were found in a house in Southeast in January. The children's mother, Banita Jacks, is charged with murder.

The father of one of the girls filed a \$25 million lawsuit against the city. Norman Penn Jr. claims that 16-year-old Brittany Jacks' death has "denied (him) the financial benefits, gifts and other contributions."

Penn's suit accuses D.C. of negligence in not heeding reports to the child welfare bureaucracy. Like another suit on behalf of Brittany's sisters, Penn's suit relies on statements by Fenty and Attorney General Peter Nickles criticizing the CFSA.

Penn's lawyer, Kim Brooks-Rodney, said the agency's failure to follow up on complaints led to Brittany's death.

"That agency received several complaints that Brittany was possibly an endangered child, and the agency simply failed to follow up on those complaints," she said. "Had the agency have followed up, they would have found out that Brittany was in grave danger, and they would have taken her out of that home, as they had the authority to do, per statute."