

# Child Fatality and Near Fatality External Review Panel Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

## MINUTES

**Members Present:** Hon. Benjamin Harrison, Chair; Commissioner Lesa Dennis, Department for Community Based Services; Representative Samara Heavrin, House of Representatives; Dr. Christina Howard, Child Abuse Pediatrician, University of Kentucky; Dr. Melissa Currie, Child Abuse Pediatrician, Norton Children's Pediatric Protection Specialist; Dr. Jaime Pittenger Kirtley, Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky; Dr. Elizabeth Salt, Citizen Foster Care Review Board; Victoria Benge, Executive Director, CASA; Nicole Smith Abbott, LCSW; Steve Shannon, Executive Director, KARP, Inc.; Geoff Wilson, Association of Addiction Professionals; Lt. Jonathan Murphy, Kentucky State Police, Post 9; Tisha Pletcher, CEO, ZeroV; Brittany Nichols, State Child Fatality Review Team; Dr. William Ralson, Chief Medical Examiner, OME; and Judge Libby Messer, Fayette Family Court.

### **Welcome**

*Hon. Benjamin Harrison, Chair*

Chair Harrison welcomed everyone to the February meeting. First item of business on the agenda is the approval of the Minutes and case reviews from the January meeting. Steve Shannon made a motion to approve the Minutes and Case Review Summaries, which was seconded by Dr. Elizabeth Salt. With no objections, the January Minutes and Case Review Summaries stand as approved.

### **Legislative Update**

Dr. Currie advised members of a meeting with Sen. Carroll and law enforcement to discuss potential solutions regarding the challenges that have occurred when investigating ingestion cases. We came up with some solutions and potential bill language to educate various professionals about investigating ingestions from a law enforcement perspective and conducting the correct testing from a medical perspective.

Elisha added there was additional discussion about amending criminal abuse in the third-degree statute to include neglect. We have not received the bill language yet. I was hoping Sen. Carroll would be able to join us today, but I think he has a committee meeting this afternoon.

Dr. Currie advised it was a very productive meeting and optimistic about improvements going forward. Chair Harrison thanked Dr. Currie and Dr. Howard for their efforts in this endeavor and meeting with legislators about this important issue. Chair Harrison confirmed we anticipate a bill will be filed regarding pediatric ingestions, but we have not seen the language yet. As soon as we are made aware, Elisha will notify the members.

Next, Chair Harrison introduced Judge Lauren Adams Ogden from the Jefferson Family Court. Chair Harrison's term as Chair ends in April and Judge Ogden will assume the role of Chair. Judge Ogden

introduced herself and is looking forward to being a part of the team. Chair Harrison thanked her for joining today.

### **Pending Cases:**

**NF-016-25-NC** – Jennifer Burke provided an update on law enforcement and court records. Law enforcement issues were removed from this case. DCBS issues were included for failing to provide evidence to the court. Judicial issues and county attorney issues are included for various reasons.

### **Case Reviews:**

The following cases were reviewed by the Panel. A case summary of findings and recommendations are attached and made a part of these minutes.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Case #</u>	<u>Analyst</u>
4	NF-040-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
1	F-033-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
2	NF-014-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
3	NF-011-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
1	NF-090-25-C	Jennifer Burke
2	NF-020-25-C	Jennifer Burke
3	F-002-25-C	Jennifer Burke
4	F-010-25-NC	Jennifer Burke
3	F-006-25-C	Emily Neal
1	NF-046-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
4	F-028-25-NC	Cynthia Hildebrandt
2	F-018-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
1	NF-077-25-C	Jennifer Burke
3	NF-121-25-NC	Jennifer Burke
2	NF-176-25-NC	Jennifer Burke
4	NF-036-25-C	Jennifer Burke
3	NF-106-25-NC	Jennifer Burke
4	NF-033-25-C	Emily Neal
1	NF-055-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
3	NF-115-25-C	Cynthia Hildebrandt
4	NF-097-25-C	Jennifer Burke

### **Additional Discussion:**

DCBS is not allowed to prevention plan with out of state placements. Is that a regional issue or policy limitation? Does not appear to be a restriction in policy but DCBS will research the issue and let the panel know if there are restrictions on out-of-state placements.

**Motion to adjourn made by Steve Shannon and seconded by Dr. Howard. With no objections meeting adjourned.**