



Community forums begin to avoid cases of abuse against minors

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By Luis Treto • Published on February 20, 2020 • Uploaded at 8:42 pm on February 20, 2020

The alleged negligence of social workers and supervisors has led to death of several children in Los Angeles County in recent years, and in an effort to improve the relationship with the community and avoid further tragedies the Department of Children and Families initiated on Thursday a series of community forums.

In 2013, Gabriel Fernández, 8, was tortured by his mother and her boyfriend.

In 2018, Damián Ventura, two years old, also died on suspicion of physical abuse at the hands of the mother and her partner. A few days later, Anthony Ávalos's parents were accused of allegedly taking his life, and last year, Noah Cuatro died when he was allegedly physically and sexually abused by his parents.

"We have to have the ability to develop a relationship with our partners and family members in order to make changes," said Bobby Cagle, director of DCFS.

Changes following accusations that social workers and supervisors of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Families have allegedly been negligent in many of the deaths of these children. According to the director, during some of these deaths, each social worker had up to 60 cases.

"What we have done in recent years is to add 3,000 social workers, so we have reduced cases to 16 per worker," said Cagle.

The agency started today a series of eight workshops in Porter Ranch, where they met with community partners, social workers, teachers and law enforcement agencies.

"Maybe there is something that we do not understand, but there is another agency that knows and with that collaboration we can understand how to provide services," said Monica Smith, of Penny Lane.

The workshops will take place over the next two years in communities of the Antelope Valley and the rest of the Los Angeles County. Parents who lost custody of their children in the past as Marisol Montiel, or are in the process, may also contribute with their experiences.

"Because we parents did something, and that was something that caught the attention of the department, maybe it was not entirely the fault of the parent," said Montiel, who managed to recover her children.



The objective ensures the director of the agency is to work together, recently the Department of Children and Families adopted new measures in staff training and file review. In the case of Gabriel Fernández, criminal charges were filed against social workers and supervisors, however, an appeals court dismissed the case.

"Social workers fear that, if a child dies, they will be criminally charged, and that has not helped the system, it is better that they have a sense of security doing their job," Cagle said. Regarding the documentary that Netflix announced will premiere soon on the death of little Gabriel Fernández and that it will strongly criticize the department, the director said it will be important to have another perspective on the problem.

The Department of Children and Families will hold on Friday the second of eight seminars that will be attended by parents who have their child custody removed or are in the process.

Article Translated by Delma Marin Rodriguez

About the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

The Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) promotes child safety and well-being by partnering with communities to strengthen families, keeping children at home whenever possible, and connecting them with stable, loving homes in times of need. It is the largest child protective services agency in the nation and is responsible for ensuring the safety of more than two million children across 88 diverse cities in Los Angeles County. Established in 1984 to keep children safe and support families in crisis, it is governed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. DCFS has nearly 9,000 staff across more than 20 offices, specialized bureaus, and administrative services. DCFS is led by Bobby D. Cagle, a former foster child and longtime social worker, who was appointed to the position by the Board of Supervisors in 2017. For more information, visit www.dcfslacounty.gov.