

THE REGION

LOCAL DIGEST

THE DISTRICT

Unmarked police car strikes woman

A woman was seriously injured when an unmarked police vehicle struck her on Wisconsin Avenue just north of Georgetown Wednesday night, D.C. police said.

The accident happened about 9:15 p.m. in the 2100 block of Wisconsin Avenue, officer Paul Metcalf, a police spokesman, said. The woman, who was not identified by police, was found unconscious but breathing, he said. She was taken to a hospital with injuries that were not thought to be life threatening.

The officer was on duty, but no further details were immediately available.

A preliminary police report said a police vehicle was involved, Metcalf said, but no further details could be confirmed.

— Clarence Williams

THE REGION

D.C. tax preparer pleads guilty in fraud

A D.C. tax preparer pleaded guilty Wednesday to charges that she was part of a conspiracy that led to the filing of more than 3,000 fraudulent returns and more than \$14 million in refunds, authorities said.

Ladonna Davis, 28, pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy and first-degree theft in U.S. District Court, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

Between 2006 and this year, Davis and others filed more than 3,000 fraudulent federal income tax returns and more than 600 fraudulent D.C. returns, as well as others in Maryland and Virginia, authorities said.

Davis and the others charged fees to prepare the returns, authorities said, asking more from those with larger returns. She could face as much as 71 months in prison.

— David Marino-Nachison

MARYLAND

Man crashes after flashing, police say

Flash. Crash. Montgomery County police have charged an Alexandria man with indecent exposure in connection with an incident near the Glen Echo area of Bethesda, where the suspect was involved in a collision after allegedly exposing himself to a jogger.

About 2:30 p.m. Saturday, a female jogger approached an officer called to the scene of a crash at MacArthur Boulevard and Oberlin Avenue. The jogger identified a man involved in the accident as the driver of a car that had pulled alongside her and asked for directions, police said.

When she went to the car, the driver was engaged in a sexual act, according to police. The driver fled from the area near Walhonding Road and was spotted by the jogger as she passed the car crash, police said. Police arrested and charged Edwin L. Morejon, 28, of Alexandria.

— Mary Pat Flaherty

3 legionellosis cases reported by officials

An Ocean City hotel is voluntarily closing a week earlier than planned for the season after three guests developed legionellosis about a week after staying there.

Maryland's health department made the announcement Wednesday. The health department said it had not confirmed that the guests acquired the illness at the Plim Plaza Hotel, and an investigation was continuing.

Legionellosis is a form of pneumonia caused by inhaling water mist containing Legionella bacteria. Symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea or severe body aches.

— Associated Press

THE DISTRICT

Foster care decisions criticized

Study: CFSA often took children from families without justification

BY TERESA TOMASSONI

The number of children removed from their homes by child abuse investigators in the District has fallen in the past year, but a recent review of some cases concluded that children are still regularly separated from their parents without adequate justification.

The study, conducted by a federally mandated panel of volunteer monitors, examined 27 cases involving 41 children over several years. In many of the instances examined by the panel, children who were placed briefly in foster care should have stayed with their families, the report concluded.

The Citizens Review Panel said the District's Child and Family Services Agency has not done enough to keep families together and urged the agency to do better.

"CFSA's child removal decisions must balance the need to protect children from serious abuse or neglect with the need to protect children from the significant emotional trauma that comes from the government separating them from their families," said the report.

The review, released last week, is the latest examination of the challenges that CFSA, like other child welfare agencies, faces in balancing the inclination to remove children when neglect or abuse is suspected and the imperative to leave them in the home unless they are in imminent danger.

In more than half of the reviews conducted, panel members found that the case record did not justify removal.

In one case cited in the report, a social worker removed a child upon discovering suspicious marks on the child's body, most likely from being whipped with a cord. The social worker placed him and his three siblings, who did not show signs of abuse, into foster care without obtaining a family court order.

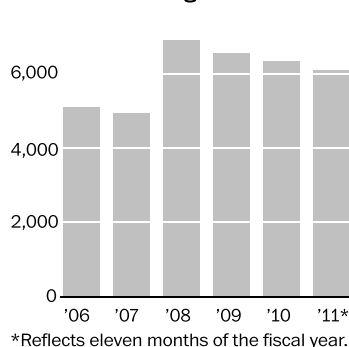
After the removal, the social worker met with the mother to work out a strategy, known as a safety plan, for addressing the problems in the home. Less than a week later, the children were back at home. The report said that if this conversation had taken place before the children were taken, foster care would not have been necessary.

The CFSA statistics show that even as the number of removals are on pace to be their lowest in years, the percentage of children who are being returned home within four months is at 35 percent, roughly the same rate as last year and a higher rate than in any of the previous three years.

Abuse and neglect investigations

More than a third of children removed from homes by the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency were placed in foster care for less than four months, according to a study conducted by a federally mandated panel of volunteer monitors that examined child welfare cases.

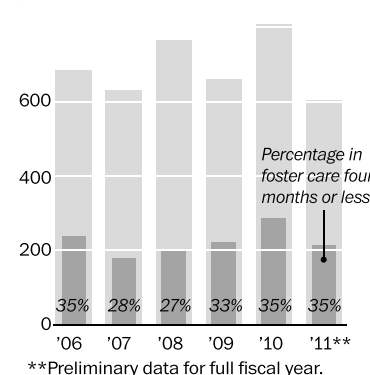
New investigations filed for abuse and neglect



*Reflects eleven months of the fiscal year.

Source: CFSA

Children removed from homes



**Preliminary data for full fiscal year.

THE WASHINGTON POST

"We've had kids that thought they were kidnapped. If a kid is just learning to talk, for example, they might stop talking for a while."

Judith Sandalow, executive director of the Children's Law Center, speaking about the trauma children undergo when they are removed from their families.

Debra Porchia-Usher, the child welfare agency's interim director, said that how quickly children are removed from their families and how quickly they are returned is an issue the CFSA continues to monitor. "We all agree fewer removals are better," she said. But she does not agree that the problem is as prevalent as the report suggests.

In an effort to make better decisions about removals, the agency recently launched a pilot program of a strategy known as differential response, which acknowledges that not every abuse or neglect report is an indicator of imminent danger.

Earlier this year, the agency also completed a policy manual on conducting investigations. All

social workers, supervisors and program managers have been trained using this new resource, Porchia-Usher said.

The process in which children are removed also remains a concern, the review panel's report said.

Under D.C. law, children are not supposed to be placed in foster care without an order from family court. Removing children on an emergency basis without a judge's permission can happen only if a child's physical safety is in immediate danger, and if the only way to avoid serious harm is to remove the child from the home. In more than 75 percent of the cases reviewed by the panel, no such risk was identified, and in none of the cases examined was a

court order sought prior to removal.

"In essence, they're [Child and Family Services] not following the law," said Judith Sandalow, executive director of the Children's Law Center, which represents more than 500 children involved in abuse or neglect cases in the District each year.

The removals are traumatizing for children, she said.

"We've had kids that thought they were kidnapped," she said. Whether a child is removed from the family for a few days or a few months, there is potential for kids to regress developmentally. "If a kid is just learning to talk, for example, they might stop talking for a while," she said.

Susan Gross, the panel chairwoman, said that in many instances, "It felt like they [child protective services social workers] were taking the easy way out so they wouldn't be caught in a mistake."

Gross, who has consulted for the Children's Defense Fund and other organizations, acknowledged, as did the report, that social workers have to make tough decisions every day.

But she said many of the children who were removed in cases she reviewed could have stayed at home if social workers talked with parents first about obtaining services such as housing and employment assistance. In 16 of the 27 cases the panel studied, such "family team meetings," as they're called, were not conducted until the family was already separated. According to CFSA, the meetings were not always feasible before removing a child.

Initially, in responding to the panel's report, Porchia-Usher said the review had relied only on summaries and not on supporting documentation. But after panel members disputed the agency's assertion, CFSA spokeswoman Mindy Good said Porchia-Usher had been incorrect and that documentation in some cases may have been lacking.

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LOTTERIES

October 5

DISTRICT

Mid-Day Lucky Numbers: **8-8-7**
 Mid-Day DC-4: **9-6-9-6**
 Mid-Day DC-5: **2-1-8-9-8**
 Lucky Numbers (Tue.): **1-2-4**
 Lucky Numbers (Wed.): **1-7-5**
 DC-4 (Tue.): **7-0-4**
 DC-4 (Wed.): **1-9-2-2**
 DC-5 (Tue.): **5-6-5-8-1**
 DC-5 (Wed.): **2-4-8-2-8**

MARYLAND

Mid-Day Pick 3: **9-6-4**
 Mid-Day Pick 4: **8-8-6-9**
 Night/Pick 3 (Tue.): **5-6-7**
 Pick 3 (Wed.): **0-9-7**
 Pick 4 (Tue.): **6-1-3-2**
 Pick 4 (Wed.): **7-9-0-9**
 Match 5 (Tue.): **4-10-26-31-37 *13**
 Match 5 (Wed.): **8-14-20-33-38 *36**

VIRGINIA

Day/Pick 3: **7-9-9**
 Pick-4: **1-4-4-0**
 Cash-5: **6-18-23-25-33**
 Night/Pick-3 (Tue.): **1-6-1**
 Pick-3 (Wed.): **4-6-1**
 Pick-4 (Tue.): **1-9-4-4**
 Pick-4 (Wed.): **0-2-3-1**
 Cash-5 (Tue.): **3-10-19-31-32**
 Cash-5 (Wed.): **5-9-15-31-33**
 Win for Life: **10-24-26-27-34-36 *19**

MULTI-STATE GAMES

Mega Millions: **3-26-40-45-52 **11**
 Megaplier: **3**
 Powerball: **7-20-43-46-54 ***17**
 Power Play: **4**
 Hot Lotto: **10-15-16-21-30 *16**

*Bonus Ball **Mega Ball ***Powerball
 †Hot Ball ‡Free Ball

For late drawings and out-of-area results, check www.washingtonpost.com/lottery

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