

25 October 2004

Governor Mitt Romney  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Office of the Governor  
Room 360 Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Romney:

I write to respectfully request your immediate investigation into the actions of Gail Klopfer, Acting Area Director of the Holyoke Area Office of the Department of Social Services regarding the safety and welfare of my children.

On 6/16/04, my ex-husband was found to have supported allegations of sexual abuse and neglect based on a report by a well-respected DSS investigator, Martha Stewart (see attached).

On 8/26/04, after a completed review of the investigation by the DSS screening unit, Gail Klopfer wrote a letter supporting the neglect to all children and unsupporting the sexual abuse to my son (see attached).

On 9/13/04, after an additional review on her own and after conferring with my ex-husband's attorney and after the presentation of no new evidence (because it is not possible with a review), Gail Klopfer wrote a letter to my ex-husband's attorney and unsupporting the neglect to all children. My ex-husband's attorney then used her letters to attempt to allow him to be alone with my children and further harm and humiliate them (see attached).

On 9/17/04, I spoke to Gail Klopfer and asked her why she had unilaterally reversed the screening unit's decision. She was rude and when I told her new disclosures were forthcoming daily in my son's therapy sessions and asked if DSS would review new evidence for a 51-A, she said "we prefer you use the courts and not DSS". She said that my ex-husband had only exposed himself sexually to my son once so it wasn't a "big deal" (this is contrary to the original DSS investigation of Martha Stewart and my son's own court directed therapist – see attached).

On 9/21/04, I spoke with the Holyoke DSS investigator in the case, Martha Stewart, who said "I am shocked that the neglect by sexual exposure was reversed," she could offer no explanation why that occurred and said she had not been consulted about the reversal.

On 9/24/04, I spoke with Amy Arizmandy (sic) of the Holyoke DSS screening unit and she told me that neglect by sexual exposure was still supported after a completed review. She told me this as she was reading the entire DSS file to me over the phone on 9/24/04.

My son's therapist's affidavit reads **"Reports of sexual exposure by Mr. Symington in the children's presence were made by Connor to this Clinician. Connor remembers in great detail his father making them watch him while he showered and watching them while they did. He remembers the father's penis being erect both in the bathroom and when he would make the children sleep with him."**

My ex-husband is a public school teacher in Longmeadow teaching children the same age as my son. Ms. Klopfer may think my children's safety isn't a "big deal". However, it is the most important thing in my life to protect my children from my ex-husband's pedophilia. I suspect every parent in Longmeadow feels the same way. I trust you feel the same way about children being sexually exploited.

As the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I respectfully request that you immediately direct the appropriate personnel to protect my children by reinstating the 51-A based on the facts of this case, the original finding of the screening unit of 8/26/04 as well as the most recent affidavit of my son's therapist dated 9/27/04. I also ask that you initiate an investigation as to how Ms. Klopfer was allowed to then reverse the supported finding after an entire screening unit had "completed a review of the investigation". Her reversal of the screening unit's decision came with no new evidence, is contrary to DSS's written standards and consequently exposed my children to the very real, imminent danger of being in the presence of this pedophile again.

Please make the system function properly and protect my children.

Sincerely,



Cheryl R. Duval  
66 Brickyard Road Extension  
Southampton, MA 01073  
(413) 527-4711

cc: Kerry Healey, Ronald Preston, Lewis H. Spence

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PAUL FITZSIMONS  
Regional Director

Ms. Cheryl Duval  
66 Brickyard Road Extension  
Southampton Ma.01073

January 17, 2005

Dear Ms. Duval,

Your October 25, 2004 letter to Governor Romney was forwarded to me for response. The primary issue in your letter was the overturn of a 51A regarding your children and why a review by the Area Director occurred. It is standard practice for the Area Director, in this case Gail Klopfer, to conduct a review prior to the holding of a fair hearing to ensure that the Department can support their decision.

In this case as part of that review the Area Director consulted with both the manager who oversees the investigation units and the direct supervisor. It was their collective conclusion that the children's story was inconsistent and did not provide sufficient grounds to support the allegations.

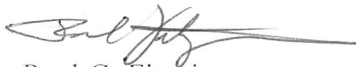
You further questioned whether we would look at any new information that may become available. You felt that the review indicated the area office would not look at new information and would prefer that you resolved this matter in your court proceedings.

First let me clearly state the area office will accept and screen any new reports that are filed utilizing their standard screening decision process. I believe it was the Director's intent to convey that it in cases where the facts can't be clearly identified in a 10 day investigation that your court proceedings offer a more ongoing place to address your concerns .In this case I believe a guardian ad litem was appointed by the court to represent the children's interest.

Additionally you raised the issue of the demeanor of the area director and what you described as her "rude" response. I discussed this issue with Ms.Klopfer and she contends it was not her intent to convey rudeness and she extends her apology if that is how she came across. While these are extremely difficult situations I expect all staff to communicate in a professional manner and have certainly communicated that expectation.

I certainly understand your desire to protect your children from any potential harm. In this case however; based on the children's conflicting reporting, highlighted by their adamant denial of any inappropriate behavior when questioned by Detective Sadler, we are not able to conclude that abuse occurred. If any new information becomes available we will review that information to determine whether a new investigation is appropriate.

Sincerely,



Paul G. Fitzsimons  
Regional Director  
Western Regional Office