

Statement for Tacoma News Tribune
From Robin Arnold-Williams
Secretary,
Department of Social and Health Services

“This case is deeply disturbing and my heart goes out to this young lady. I also find it concerning that our entire child welfare system did not protect this child from severe abuse.

“Our child welfare system is designed to hold the department and our partners, including the court system, accountable and that did not happen.

“That is why a multi-disciplinary team was convened to review this case. The team members included DSHS, a King County judge and a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), a doctor who specializes in child abuse and neglect and an assistant attorney general.

“The team concluded that this case revealed a system breakdown involving all stakeholders including the department, the courts, the CASA program and services providers. They failed to hold each other accountable. It is critical that each part of the system act as a check and balance on other parts of the system. That was not evident in this case.

“We are thankful for the worker who uncovered the abuse in 2006. I believe her persistence in handling the case and her resistance to manipulation by the foster parent shows that our workers are better trained now and shows improvement in child welfare practice.

“The case review will be used to further improve our practice and strengthen our child welfare system.”