

Wednesday 3/15/23

At approximately 3:30pm I was helping Mr. Meister with bus duty when Mr. Moore came to talk to me about a student and then Mrs. Higdon approached saying that I was needed at Door #1 immediately regarding the Neal Family.

I immediately started walking down to Door #1 and on the way Mrs. Higdon shared that Mario Neal picked up the kids but it was Tom Neal's day and the grandparents (Tom's parents) were here to pick-up the kids. I went outside to find Mrs. Sommer who shared that she got a call that Mr. Neal was picking up the kids, but didn't ask which Mr. Neal and sent the kids down to the Welcome Desk for early dismissal. Mrs. Sommers pointed out the grandparents and I pulled them to the side and introduced myself. The grandparents shared that Tom was out of town for work and would be home in the evening. They shared they were here to pick up the kids, as they normally help out with pickup when Tom is not able to, and shared they are on the pickup list and have picked up the kids before. Grandparents asked how Mario was allowed to pick up the kids when it wasn't his day. I apologized and acknowledged everything they shared and confirmed it was Tom's day and that we would figure out what happened. Because it was dismissal and there were students and parents everywhere I asked the grandparents if they would come inside so we could talk and figure out what happened. I asked the grandparents to wait by the bench while I talked with Mrs. Booker. I asked Mrs. Booker for a copy of the pick-up schedule/calendar just to verify it was Tom's day and then asked Mrs. Booker what happened. Mrs. Booker reported at 3:00pm Mario called and said he was picking up the kids and that he had an appointment with DCFS and was told to bring them in right away. At this time Mrs. Higdon told me that Mrs. Marshall, the principal, was on the phone. I spoke with Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Detwiler, our assistant principal, and updated them on what I knew so far. Mrs. Marshall said that we messed up, we let the kids go with the wrong parent and directed me to call 911. I hung up with Mrs. Marshall and called 911 from my cell phone and asked Mrs. Higdon to be present while I called. I called 911 and explained who I was and that I was calling from ASCA and explained what happened. The 911 operator asked if we had paperwork from the court, which I verified we did and asked for the kids names, ages and then parent names. The operator said that they would send a police officer to the school to speak with me. I then updated the grandparents on all that I knew at that point, I acknowledged our mistake, and apologized. Tom was on the phone with his mom, but on hold talking with his attorney, once he came back on he asked to speak with me and I then explained to him what I knew up to that point.

When the officer arrived we went into the conference room to talk privately and I presented the file from Mrs. Marshall's office with all the paperwork we had for the Neal Family, which included paperwork from the court and the calendar/schedule of what days the kids were supposed to be with who. Mrs. Marshall arrived at this point. The officer, Siegmeyer, asked if anyone had tried to contact Mario. The grandparents shared there was a no contact order. As the officer looked over the paperwork, he asked the grandparents if they could explain so he didn't have to read over all the court documents. I told him that I talked to the grandparents, checked with the front desk on the kids being signed out and then called 911.

I stepped out and asked Mrs. Booker if anyone tried contacting Mario and she said nobody called Mario. I asked Mrs. Booker if I could use her phone and if she could contact Mario. Mario picked up and I greeted Mario and asked him if he had the kids, which he said he did. I asked Mario about picking up the kids from school on a day that was not his day, that was Tom's day, and explained that Tom's parents were currently at school to pick up the kids. Mario was upset, said that he was at the DCFS office and was told to bring the kids in right away. I asked to speak with the DCFS worker. Mario said "Mr. Carl, Mrs. Magana is on the phone from the kids' school and she would like to talk with you." I could hear a male voice in the background say, "give me 5 minutes we are almost done." Mario relayed the message and then told me that the kids have been "traumatized, crying and upset" and have been hurt repeatedly over the past 3 months. Mario started to cry and proceeded to say that he trusted me to talk to his children and protect them, he blamed me and said this was my fault, that for 3 months his children have been hurt and I have done nothing to protect them. He said that I was being investigated along with everyone else (GAL, therapist, grandparents). Mario said that [REDACTED] told me she was being hurt and I did nothing about it. I said with all due respect, [REDACTED] did not tell me she was being hurt in any way and that I told him in an email, if [REDACTED] reported anything I would report it to the GAL/DCFS. Mario said "[REDACTED] told me she told you and you did nothing." Mario continued to be upset and blamed me for not protecting his children. I heard a male voice in the background and Mario said he had to go. I told Mario that I needed to speak with the DCFS worker. Mario said, "Mr. Carl I have Mrs. Magana on the phone from the kids' school (I heard the kids in the background go "Mrs. Magana!") on the phone and she would like to speak with you. The worker came on the phone, I introduced myself and asked for his name which I did not understand and asked him to repeat, he said Carl Brewer. I asked if he had an ID number/worker number and he gave the phone number to the main office. Mrs. Marshall was at the desk at this point and called the main number. Mrs. Marshall verified Carl was a DCFS worker and that the kids were in the office and safe.

DCFS Worker - Carl Brewer, office number 630-231-6900
Officer Siegmeyer, Incident # 21166
Grandparents Pam and James (Jim) Neal
Pam 517-256-4894
Jim 517-256-4895

Margie's notes:

Everything above is accurate. At this point I returned to the grandparents and the police officer and shared that we had confirmed by phone that the children were at the local DCFS office with Mario. The police officer offered to go there himself to make sure everything was okay, and the grandparents accepted his offer. After he left, Tom called his parents and instructed them to also go to the DCFS office, where the children would be returned to them.