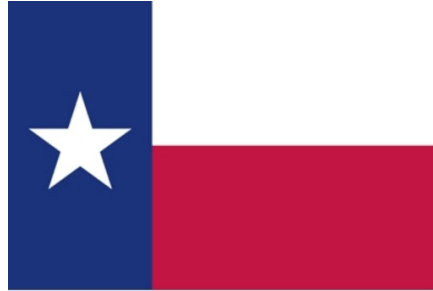




Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 17, 2012

Texas CPS Under Investigation After Child's Death

The Texas Child Protective Services is under [investigation](#) for accusations that officials at the organization directed workers to withhold child abuse files and photographs from law enforcement following the death of a child. Police executed several search warrants and seized computers, cell phones, and files from the local office of the state child protection agency and a supervisor's home as part of an ongoing investigation.



TEXAS
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[Chron reports](#), "The rare action against one of the state's largest agencies comes six weeks after Abilene police discovered 22-month-old Tamryn Klapheke dead of dehydration and her two sisters barely alive inside a Dyess Air Force base home on August 28."

The three children are believed to have been abandoned by their mother, Tiffany Klapheke, who is now in jail on three counts of child abuse.

The *Huffington Post* [reported](#) at the time of the arrest, "Her toddler suffered from dehydration and malnutrition from a lack of basic care over a period of time, according to the preliminary autopsy report from the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office in Fort Worth."

That same report showed that the toddler was severely underweight, weighing just 17.5 pounds, and was found to have chemical burns, revealing that the child was exposed to human waste.

The other two children, aged 3 years and 6 months old, were treated for severe neglect at a children's hospital in Fort Worth, where they were placed in intensive care.

In an interview from jail, Klapheke told Abilene's KTAB-TV that she understands she was being an unfit mother but "I didn't put them first anymore." She indicates that her husband's deployment left her ill-equipped to handle three children on her own.

Klapheke moved to Texas with her husband years ago and had no relatives in the area. She claimed that she was stressed and had no help. She also said she tried committing suicide three weeks ago but a friend stopped her.

"I'm so just stressed out and depressed, and I just need help taking care of them, and I don't have any help," she told the station.

However, despite her assertions of feeling alone, *Big County Home Page* reports that she may have had a live-in boyfriend while her husband was deployed in Afghanistan.

While the severity of Klapheke's case is already significant, the focus is now on Texas Child Protective Services. Police state that CPS workers were instructed by their supervisors not to comply with officers investigating the case.

"In the ensuing days following the death of the child, the department became aware of instances in which CPS employees were told by supervisors not to cooperate with law enforcement," Chief Stan Standridge told reporters Tuesday.

"The evidence suggests that the conduct being investigated predates the Klapheke investigation," Chief



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[Stan Standridge](#) told the [Houston Chronicle](#).

Likewise, the *Houston Chronicle* reports that CPS investigator Claudia Gonzalez had quietly closed a previous case involving Tamryn and her sister six days before the girls were found. She did so without visiting the family a final time and without the signature of her supervisor. According to the *Chronicle*, that is a firing offense per CPS rules.

In fact, Gonzalez had not seen the family in approximately 10 months when she closed the case.

Gonzalez has since resigned from CPS.

Police acquired a search warrant that allows them to seize files, computers, and cell phones from Texas CPS offices.

The search warrant affidavit makes a number of accusations against several CPS workers. Chron writes:

The search warrant affidavit details suspicions that CPS regional administrator Bit Whitaker; program director Gretchen Denny, who has since relinquished that post and been reassigned; and CPS supervisor Barbara McDaniel, who was later reprimanded by CPS; tampered with evidence involving the Klapheke investigation.

Specifically, the affidavit states that another CPS worker, Rebecca Tapia, “was ordered not to release any information or photographs to medical staff or law enforcement” after Tamryn’s death and while investigators were at the hospital with the surviving sisters.

“Rebecca did not provide a photograph because she was directed by a supervisor not to provide a photograph,” Standridge told the *Chronicle*.

The affidavit also indicates that after interviewing 12 CPS employees following Tamryn’s death, police believe several supervisors “have intentionally and knowingly concealed, altered, or destroyed records and other documentation material to this investigation because of the damaging nature of the documents.”

The affidavit states that Supervisor Barbara McDaniel had been interviewed on September 18 for several hours in which she lied repeatedly and admitted to ordering her staff not to share any information.

But CPS spokesman Patrick Crimmins said, “We are cooperating fully with the Abilene Police Department.”

Meanwhile, a source involved in the investigation revealed that CPS officials had already been warned by the Taylor County district attorney about omitting data on court documents involving children who had undergone abuse and were removed from their homes. But that did not stop CPS from omitting data from Tamryn’s paperwork that was sent to prosecutors following her death.

In a press release issued by Police Chief Standridge regarding the search warrant affidavit, Standridge is careful not to impugn all CPS caseworkers.

“I want to make it clear that this investigation does not concern overwhelmed CPS caseworkers. I acknowledge CPS caseworkers carry a high case load, and most CPS employees are exceptional people trying to safeguard our children against abuse,” Standridge [wrote](#).

“Instead, this investigation stems from the refusal of certain CPS supervisors to cooperate with the



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Abilene Police Department regarding the Tamryn Klapheke death investigation.”

Photo: An undated file photo provided by the Taylor, Texas, County Sheriff's Office shows Tiffany Nicole Klapheke: AP Images; Texas state flag and logotype of Texas Child Protective

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