



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

September 30, 2021

Aprille Sutton
Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan
3785 Veterans Drive
Traverse City, MI 49684

RE: License #: CB280201037
Investigation #: 2021C0102031
Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan

Dear Ms. Sutton:

Attached is the Special Investigation Report for the above referenced facility. No substantial violations were found.

Please review the enclosed documentation for accuracy and contact Claudia Triestram, Area Manager at (616) 552-3662. with any questions. I am leaving State service on October 1, 2021 and Licensing Consultant Holly Austin will be temporarily assigned to your agency. She can be reached at (269) 330-7082 or AustinH3@michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Collier".

Don Collier, Licensing Consultant
MDHHS\Division of Child Welfare Licensing
Suite 11
701 S. Elmwood
Traverse City, MI 49684
(231) 342-5326

enclosure

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD WELFARE LICENSING
SPECIAL INVESTIGATION REPORT**

I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

License #:	CB280201037
Investigation #:	2021C0102031
Complaint Receipt Date:	07/07/2021
Investigation Initiation Date:	07/08/2021
Report Due Date:	09/05/2021
Licensee Name:	Child & Family Services of NW Michigan Inc
Licensee Address:	3785 Veterans Drive Traverse City, MI 49684
Licensee Telephone #:	(231) 946-8975
Administrator:	Aprille Sutton
Licensee Designee:	Aprille Sutton
Name of Facility:	Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan
Facility Address:	3785 Veterans Drive Traverse City, MI 49684
Facility Telephone #:	(231) 946-8975
Original Issuance Date:	09/01/1990
License Status:	REGULAR
Effective Date:	04/05/2021
Expiration Date:	04/04/2023
Capacity:	Unknown
Program Type:	CHILD PLACING AGENCY, PRIVATE

II. ALLEGATION(S)

	Violation Established?
Agency staff members conducted inappropriate behaviors and verbal interactions with relative placement. There are concerns that the agency has withheld documents from MCI, has mishandled relative visits, and is not addressing the adoption process in an ethical, policy driven manner.	No
Additional Findings	No

III. METHODOLOGY

07/07/2021	Special Investigation Intake 2021C0102031
07/08/2021	Special Investigation Initiated - Telephone Called Relative A for additional information
07/08/2021	Contact - Face to Face Unannounced on-site reviewed personnel files of Staff 1 and Staff 2
07/12/2021	Contact - Document Received Document from Relative A and followed with a phone interview
08/24/2021	Contact - Document Received Reviewed evaluation documents in MiSACWIS for Grandparent(s) A, B, D and E
08/24/2021	Contact - Telephone call received Interviewed Supervisor 4, Supervisor 5 and Adoption Worker 2 by telephone
09/30/2021	Contact - Telephone call made Interviewed Adoption Worker 2 by telephone Called and left a message for Relative A

ALLEGATION:

Agency staff members conducted inappropriate behaviors and verbal interactions with relative placement. There are concerns that the agency has withheld documents from MCI, has mishandled relative visits, and is not addressing the adoption process in an ethical, policy driven manner.

INVESTIGATION:

Child C was placed with Relative D on August 21, 2020. Case responsibility was transferred to Antrim/Charlevoix/Emmet County DHHS on August 27, 2020 and then to Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan October 20, 2020. Child A had been placed with Relative A and Relative B from March 2, 2020 to August 21, 2020. Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan was given the adoption responsibility on October 20, 2020, according to MiSACWIS (Michigan Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System).

Relative A states in a letter dated April 26, 2021, "It may be helpful to know that (Child C) lived with us for a long time, but currently lives with his other grandparents after we indicated a few months ago that we were unable to apply for adoption for specific and legitimate reasons. After those reasons dissipated, we applied to adopt him. In the interim, his other grandparents applied as well."

Relative A was married and divorced from Relative D and they had a now deceased daughter who was the mother of Child C.

I reviewed the MiSACWIS case record of Child C, and it was documented that on March 19, 2020, Relative A and Relative B told Child C's DHHS Worker that they could not provide permanency for Child C. In a documented conversation on April 20, 2020, Relative A wanted DHHS to say that it was DHHS idea to move Child C to Relative D and Relative A wanted Relative D not to tell Child C that he wanted Child C moved.

In a telephone joint interview with Supervisor 4, Supervisor 5 and Adoption Worker 2 they said they were never rude or unprofessional to Relative A. They said at one point during a ZOOM visit between Relative A, Relative B and Child C, Relative A held up a sign that said, "they won't let us visit" and Adoption Worker 2 politely told Relative A that the ZOOM visit was going to end.

The agency wrote a "Adoptive Family Assessment Addendum" dated March 15, 2021 of Relative A and Relative B which they said the following:

During adoption interviews Relative A has focused on disparaging the (Relative D and Relative E), particularly (Relative D). This seems to be in an attempt to persuade our agency that the (Relative D and Relative E) are not a

good placement for (Child C) rather than just focusing on his needs and how they can continue to maintain and strengthen their relationship with them. (Child C) is already in a home with a family member, his needs are being met, he is thriving there and is bonded with his caregivers. Therefore, there is no reason or justification to move him and disrupt him or his life at this time. Given how well (Child C) is currently doing coupled with the concerns indicated above, Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan are recommending the (Relative D and Relative E) as (Child C's) adoptive parents. Should the (Relative D and Relative E) home not be an adoptive option, (Relative A and Relative B) are recommended as a second option.

Relative A outline allegations against the agency in two letters as follows:

- In a telephone conversation Adoption Worker 2 told them that they “needed to do some soul searching”
- The agency would not allow them to ask any questions
- The agency refused to respond to text messages
- The hung up during a phone conversation
- They were admonished for missing a ZOOM meeting which was which was delayed due to a connection problem
- Documents were withheld from the Michigan Children Institute
- Child C was told that they did not want to spend time with him
- That Relative D was addicted to prescription drugs

I interviewed Adoption Worker 2 by telephone on September 30, 2021. Adoption Worker 2 was asked about telling Relative A and Relative B to do “some soul searching”. She said it was in the content of Relative A and Relative B not wanting to adopt Child C and then changing their minds and wanting to be a competing party in Child C’s adoption process. I asked about not allowing Relative A and Relative to ask questions. Adoption Worker 2 said that she had called and met with them, and they were always allowed to ask questions. I asked about her not responding to text messages, she said Relative A and Relative B told her that their preferred method of communication was to use text messaging. Adoption Worker 2 said that she always responded to Relative A and Relative B’s text messages except for one that was “snarky”.

When asked if she had ever hung up on Relative A and Relative B, Adoption Worker 2 said that she had never hung up on Relative A and Relative B. She said that during a ZOOM visit with Child C, Relative A had displayed handwritten notes to Child C that were not appropriate and she told Relative A that the ZOOM visit would be over. I asked about the allegation that a ZOOM visit was canceled due to connection problems and Relative A and Relative B were admonished for not showing up for the meeting. Adoption Worker 2 said that never happened.

There was an allegation that the agency withheld documents from the Michigan Children Institute, Adoption Worker 2 said that she never withheld documents and she needed more information on what the allegation was about.

The allegation that Child C was told that Relative A and Relative B did not want to spend time with him was discussed, and Adoption Worker 2 said that this never happened.

Finally, there was an allegation that Relative D was addicted to prescription drugs. Adoption Worker 2 said they took this allegation seriously and drug tested Relative D.

APPLICABLE RULE	
R 400.12206	Staff qualifications.
	(1) An agency shall require a staff member who has ongoing contact with children or parents to be a person who has the ability, experience, education, and training to perform the duties assigned.
ANALYSIS:	Based on the interviews and documents assessed in this special investigation, it cannot be established that Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan violated the above rule.
CONCLUSION:	VIOLATION NOT ESTABLISHED

IV. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that there be no change to the licensing status of this private, child placing agency as a result of this special investigation.



September 30, 2021

Don Collier
Licensing Consultant

Date

Approved By:



September 30, 2021

Claudia Triestram
Area Manager

Date