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## UPDATE

### Officials seek answers to baby's death

### Neighbors: Not enough done for Madison

**BY BRANDY BRUBAKER** The Dominion Post

Sparked by the death of baby Madison Dodson, elected officials in Pennsylvania and West Virginia say they want to make sure no children fall through the cracks of the systems designed to protect them.

Madison Violet Dodson died Jan. 6 in Point Marion, Pa. She suffered from dehydration and malnutrition, a medical examiner determined in a preliminary autopsy.

Madison's parents, Robert David Dodson, 55, and Tammy Jo Bohon, 35, of Morgantown Street, Point Marion, were charged with criminal homicide and endangering the welfare of children for their daughter's death. A preliminary hearing in their case has not yet been scheduled.

Fayette County (Pa.) Commissioner Vince Zapotosky said he will review the findings of a state investigation of the county's Children and Youth Services (CYS) to determine whether anyone should be held accountable for Madison's death.

"If there needs to be someone held accountable, I assure you that will happen," Zapotosky said.

In West Virginia, Monongalia County state Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer said she is planning to meet with officials from the state Department of Health and Human Services about what could or should have been done to help Madison while she lived in Morgantown.

The family lived in the Morgantown area when the baby was born but moved to Pennsylvania a few months later.

West Virginia's Child Protective Services spokeswoman, Marsha Dadisman, did not respond in time for this report.

Zapotosky said the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare mandates a fatality review after the death of a child. He expects to receive preliminary findings later this week.

He said it is too soon to determine whether there was any wrongdoing on the part of CYs regarding Madison, but that determination needs to be made.

Fleischauer said she was contacted by Rachel Fetty, a Morgantown resident and local attorney, about Madison's case. Fetty previously told The Dominion Post that she befriended the Dodson family when they lived in Morgantown and feared for Madison's health and wellbeing. Fetty said Madison and her family lived in Morgantown from her October 2009 birth until spring 2010.

Coincidentally, Fleischauer said she is scheduled to meet with a top DHHR official today and will ask him to set up a meeting with her and Fetty. Monongalia County's other delegates — Charlene Marshall, Amanda Pasdon and Tony Barill — also said they are looking into the case.

Fleischauer said she wants to examine state Child and Protective Services procedures to see what can

be done to prevent cases like Madison's from happening in the future.

Fetty wasn't the only one who was concerned about Madison and the seven other children in the Dodson household.

Two former neighbors and a former landlord of the family told The Dominion Post they called CYS repeatedly about Madison or her siblings while they lived in Point Marion.

Erin Strimel lived near the family in Point Marion before they moved a couple of streets over, to the house where Madison later died. Strimel said the family lived on her street in a rented home from the spring of 2010 until that fall.

She said she called CYS three to five times. The reasons for the calls, she said, were that the teenagers were sitting on the porch roof with Madison, the parents were gone for more than 24 hours or that the 3-year-old boy was in the middle of the road by himself.

"I feel bad because if CYS would've done something six months ago, that baby would still be here," Strimel said. "I'm not the only one who called. Everybody in the neighborhood called."

Ruth Eichelberger, another neighbor, said she also called CYS. She said she saw the boy in the street several times by himself. She even went inside the Dodsons' house once.

"I wanted out of there for the fear that I was going to catch something," she said. "It was that bad."

Eichelberger said the house was littered with trash and feces and there was only one bed in the entire house. A box of pasta was the only food she could find, she said.

Erin Shreve, the Dodsons' former landlord, said she was with Eichelberger on that trip inside the home.

"There were dirty diapers on the floor. There was feces everywhere," she said. "It took us a month to clean it up."

Shreve said she rented the home to the Dodsons. She said they seemed like a nice family, but her opinion quickly changed. Eventually, she evicted them.

Between her and the neighbors, she estimated they called CYS more than 20 times.

CYS case worker manager Gina D'Auria said she cannot comment on specific cases.

Speaking in general terms, D'Auria said that CYS does not have the authority to remove a child from a home on its own. Children can be removed by the police or by an emergency court order, which a CYS worker can apply for. A physician may also hold a child for up to 24 hours if he believes CYS needs to investigate further.