

Agency to study Milwaukee County foster care

By Crocker Stephenson of the Journal Sentinel

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The Death of Christopher Thomas



For complete archived coverage of the story of the death of 13-month-old Christopher L. Thomas Jr., [click here](#).

The safety of children in Milwaukee County's foster care system is the focus of a study to be conducted by the Planning Council for Health and Human Services Inc., the agency's executive director, Kathleen Pritchard, announced Thursday.

The Nov. 11 beating death of 13-month-old foster child Christopher Thomas has raised questions about the quality and oversight of foster care in Milwaukee County, according to a statement issued by the nonprofit agency, and points to the need to identify programs that are working in other communities.

"We want to know how we can improve the system going forward," Pritchard said.

"The intent is to make sure this doesn't happen again."

The study was commissioned in honor of the late Jim Ryan, a former social worker and a longtime advocate for child welfare, who died in November 2007. Ryan was mayor of Hales Corners for almost 20 years, president and CEO of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center, as well as president and CEO of Penfield Children's Center.

Funding for the study, expected to be completed in March, has been provided by an anonymous donor through the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Bright Futures Milwaukee Fund.

Pritchard called the gift "a fitting way to commemorate Jim's commitment to vulnerable children."

- Crocker Stephenson