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Report: Ayla Reynolds 'Terrified' of Father

Written by

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WINTHROP -- A new angle on the Ayla Reynolds case has come to light...

In an independent investigative piece entitled, "The Taking of Ayla Reynolds," Terrilyn Simpson - who's written extensively on Department of Health and Human Services child protective issues - reports Ayla Reynolds was "visibly afraid of her father," Justin DiPietro.

Two months before her disappearance, Ayla was in the care of her mother's sister, Jessica Reynolds, in Lewiston.

Simpson reports a DHHS supervisor approved DiPietro to pick Ayla up at Jessica's home.

That's something Simpson says was not only unwise -- in light of allegations of physical abuse by DiPietro -- but improper.

"In spite of that, a DHHS case worker supervisor stepped in and orchestrated the transfer of this child, from the mother's family to the father's family, in a situation where the case worker actually had no jurisdiction," said Simpson.

Simpson writes that a Lewiston police officer who accompanied DiPietro to the home, reported Ayla broke down crying -- uncontrollably -- at the sight of her father.

Ayla would suffer a broken arm one month later, while in DiPietro's care.

Simpson reports Jessica Reynolds told a DHHS official doctors indicated the injury was "uncommon" for a then-19-month-old.

FOX 22/ABC-7 reached out to DHHS.

Officials say they're unable to comment on specific cases.

A Portland attorney for Trista Reynolds is contemplating suing the agency.

****Correction:** This story has been amended to clarify that *Jessica Reynolds* told DHHS doctors had indicated Ayla's arm injury was "uncommon in a 19-month-old child."

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