

**Television Review**

# Series indicts child-welfare system

**By Suzanne C. Ryan**

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It's been two years since Logan Marr of Maine was found dead from asphyxiation after her foster mother used duct tape to strap the 5-year-old into a high chair and covered her mouth and face as a punishment. Tonight, in a heart-breaking one-hour documentary, PBS's "Frontline" series examines the events leading up to Logan's death and the role Maine's department of human services played in it.

"Failure to Protect: The Taking of Logan Marr" airs on WGBH-TV (Channel 2) at 9. The second part of the investigation, in which the DHS is further examined, airs next Thursday on Channel 2 at 9. It's titled "Failure to Protect: The Caseworker Files."

Tonight's film by itself is an indictment of the state's child-welfare system. It's particularly gut-wrenching because it includes video footage of one of Logan's state-supervised visits with her birth mother, in which the girl stops opening Christmas gifts to complain that her foster mother has been hurting her.

Logan's caseworker at the time forbade her birth mother, Christy Marr, from asking Logan to explain what had happened. After Logan's death, the film reveals, that caseworker was never disciplined.

The documentary unfolds primarily in the form of two extensive interviews with Logan's "mothers" — Marr and foster mother Sally Schofield, who was a respected DHS caseworker intent on adopting Logan even though she had trouble controlling her. Schofield was eventually sentenced to 20

**Failure to Protect:  
The Taking of Logan Marr**

PBS's "Frontline"

On: WGBH-TV (Channel 2)

Time: Tonight at 9 p.m.

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years in jail. She granted the PBS interview before her trial.

Schofield is matter-of-fact about her contact with Logan. She displays no remorse or sense of responsibility.

For her part, Marr appears immature as she talks about how she couldn't change her lifestyle to accommodate her child.

But it's Logan's voice — heard through the recollections of Marr and Schofield, as well as through journal entries from another foster mother — that resonates the loudest when she repeatedly cries out that she just wants to go home.

"Failure to Protect: The Caseworker Files" examines the public outcry that followed Logan's death.

Although the DHS would not discuss the case with "Frontline," the department did make the unprecedented decision to allow PBS to follow a group of caseworkers for three months as they interacted with families and one another after the death.

That footage reveals that the DHS office in Bangor, like most

such offices in every state, is overwhelmed. Staff turnover is high. In Maine, half of all the caseworkers have less than two years of experience, a fact that some in the film complain results in their cases being mishandled.

According to the film, the child-welfare system has shifted philosophically in recent years placing more emphasis on protecting children and removing them from questionable homes more quickly than in the past, giving parents less time to turn their lives around.

Using a handful of cases that unfolded during its observation period, "Frontline" skillfully illustrates the complexity of the issues facing overburdened child-welfare workers. Even with their children's custody at stake, many parents are unwilling to change or unable to recognize that they have a problem. Some children act to protect their parents, even going so far as to deny abuse if that means they can remain in the only homes they know.

PBS's "Failure to Protect" series is a moving and compelling look at the overlapping problems of the child-welfare system. The solution — finding a balance between saving children and destroying families — is agonizingly elusive.

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