

Child Abuse Probed, Victim's Dad Says

JUL 19 1978

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A child abuse complaint was reportedly being investigated by the Erie County Department of Social Services when a mother, who is charged with killing her four children, voluntarily placed them in a foster home.

Joseph Person, father of Kyla Person, 9, one of four children killed late Sunday night at 122 Montana Ave., told The Courier-Express about the investigation Tuesday night in an exclusive interview.

The children's mother, Mrs. Gail Trait, 26, has been charged with second-degree murder in connection with her children's deaths.

Signed Release

Person said before Mrs. Trait surrendered the four children, a caseworker from the Department of Social Services, re-

quired because he had been placed in a foster home.

Person said his signature was required because he had been providing financial support for his daughter.

Person stated Mrs. Barbara Murphy, a caseworker, said the children were being placed in a foster home because officials from the Erie County Department of Social Services were investigating charges of child abuse or child neglect against the mother.

Fred J. Buscaglia, commissioner of The Erie County Department of Social Services, said he could not confirm or deny the charges of child abuse or child neglect against the suspect.

Person said Mrs. Murphy told him that placing the children in

a foster home, also would allow Mrs. Trait time to attend school at Erie Community College, City Campus and "to get herself together."

Complaint Levied

Person said officials did not tell him who filed the charges against the mother. But he said there had been a complaint levied against the mother that she had left her children unattended in a previous home at 39 Victoria Ave.

Person said welfare authorities denied him the custody of his daughter unless a court order was obtained.

He said he was not prepared to go to court at that time and reluctantly agreed to allow his daughter to be placed in a foster home.

Person said he agreed to allow Mrs. Trait to regain

custody of the children because she claimed she was moving to Atlanta, Ga. with them so she could study nursing.

Signed Return Papers

Person said he thought the new location would be good for Mrs. Trait and the children so he signed the papers to return them to her care.

Looking back on the circumstances, Person said he "thinks welfare officials acted to hastily" in returning the children to their mother.

He suggested that welfare officials probably did not spend an adequate amount of time in investigating whether Mrs. Trait would be able to properly care for her children.

Charles Trait, the father of the other three slain children, could not be contacted for comment Tuesday night.