

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Laura Edouard

County: Osceola

Date of Birth: 05/17/2018

Date of Death: 05/08/2022

Report Number: 2022-142639

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Laura Edouard	3 years old	Child Victim
[REDACTED]	8 years old	Half Sibling by mother
Joanne Zephir	36 years old	Mother

Circumstances Surrounding Death

On May 8, 2022, the 3-year-old passed away after being made to drink bleach and being strangled, both by the mother.

According to the mother and law enforcement, the following information was provided.

On May 7, 2022, the mother's sister kept the children while the mother was at work. The mother finished work at approximately 4:22 p.m. The mother then spoke to her estranged husband (the decedent's father) prior to going to his apartment. She arrived at approximately 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. The mother still has a key for his home. The mother asked him about him lying about cheating, which he again denied. The mother then told him to have sex. The father got naked, the mother stabbed him, and she fled the scene.

The mother then went to get her children and does not know the time she picked them up. The mother told her children that she was going to jail because she had done something to the (decedent's) father. The girls did not say anything when she told them this. The mother's vehicle was out of gas and she had to park. The mother had bleach in the car and had both girls drink it. They did not like it. They said it was, "Yucky." She told them to go to sleep. The 3-year-old fell asleep as she drank and drank. The mother told the 8-year-old to drink so much. The mother drank bleach as well.

The 8-year-old stated her mother picked her and sister up. Her mother was sad, mad, and happy. They got into the mother's car and drove around. They went to a store but remained in the vehicle. The mother poured something you use to clean with into milk and poured it into a cup. The mother stated it was good, but she lied about it being good because it was bad. The mother gave the milk to her younger sister. Her sister fell asleep. The 8-year-old drank the milk and threw it up. The mother gave her clothes to change into. The mother then gave her the phone to talk to her aunt. They walked to the

road and knocked on someone's door. Her mother told her aunt, "My kids died, I tried to kill them." The police then came and gave her water.

According to law enforcement, the mother confessed to attempting to kill her husband, giving the girls bleach, drinking bleach herself, and strangling the 3-year-old. The mother told the family that she was behind a Walmart. Between that call and when they were found it was 19 minutes. The 8-year-old was found standing in an intersection and patrol officers found the vehicle with both the mother and the 3-year-old unresponsive inside. They were all transported to Advent Health Celebration.

On May 8, 2022, Laura Edouard was pronounced deceased at 1:58 a.m.

The mother consented to a drug screen and was positive for ETG (Alcohol).

The Child Protection Team has positive findings for physical abuse as to both children.

The Osceola County Sheriff's Office investigated the death of Laura Edouard (22i048676). On May 8, 2022, the mother was arrested on an Out of County Warrant from Orange County for Attempted Second Degree Murder, Aggravated Battery with a Deadly Weapon, and Battery Domestic Violence towards the decedent's father. On May 11, 2022, the mother was charged with Attempted Murder and Aggravated Child Abuse as to the surviving sibling. On May 24, 2022, the mother was charged with First Degree Murder in the death of Laura Edouard.

The Autopsy was received on August 12, 2022, and indicated District 9 Medical Examiner Sara H. Zydowicz, M.D., completed an autopsy of Laura Edouard on May 8, 2022. ME# 22-00903.

Cause of Death: Strangulation

Manner of Death: Homicide

On August 12, 2022, the Department of Children and Families' investigation was closed with:

- Verified Findings of Death and Physical Injury as to Laura Edouard, with Joanne Zephir as the caregiver responsible.
- Verified Findings of Substance Misuse as to Laura Edouard and [REDACTED], with Joanne Zephir as the caregiver responsible.

Other Children in the Family:

The sibling was deemed to be unsafe, was sheltered on May 9, 2022, and placed in the care of her aunt and uncle.

Summary of Current Agency Involvement with Family

The family did not have any open services.

Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

The family has two prior abuse reports in 2020 and 2022, both involving concerns for household violence.



Central Region Child Fatality Prevention Specialist
Kirby Morgan

8/16/22

Date



Central Region Director of Child Protection
Stephanie Weis

08/16/2022

Date