

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Sergio Rhodes

County: Osceola

Date of Birth: 06/27/2016

Date of Death: 07/06/2022

Report Number: 2022-202854

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Sergio Rhodes	6 years old	Child Victim
[REDACTED]	9 months old	Sibling
[REDACTED]	2 years old	Sibling
[REDACTED]	2 years old	Sibling
[REDACTED]	4 years old	Sibling
[REDACTED]	5 years old	Sibling
Bianca Blaise	25 years old	Mother
Larry Rhodes, Sr.	22 years old	Father

Circumstances Surrounding Death

On July 6, 2022, the 6-year-old passed away after being found unresponsive in the hotel bathroom where the family was staying on July 5, 2022.

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

The mother advised that none of the children had any medical issues, they had not been sick in the days leading up to the incident, were not on any medications, and all six children were up to date on their shots. The mother explained that she was typically gone all day, working between 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. daily. When she got home the children were always bathed, fed, and had usually been put to bed by the father. The mother stated that she did not go to tuck the children in, kiss them or say anything to them.

The mother recalled approximately two weeks prior to the incident the father "whooped" the child, but she did not remember for what exactly. At that time, she observed marks on his bottom, as well as scarring. The mother said that she told herself that she would leave the situation but was waiting for the right time to leave and say something. Approximately one week prior, the 9-month-old crawled off the bed and fell, sustaining a bruise to his eye, but she could not recall any head injuries. The mother stated approximately one week prior, she told the child that she would get him out of the situation and now she feels guilty because if she had done something or said

something, "Sergio wouldn't be dead!" The advised that she was unaware of how the children sustained their injuries, stating that law enforcement had shown her the photographs of the children, but she had no explanation.

On July 5, 2022, the mother woke up at approximately 8:00 a.m., she got dressed, and paid the rent for the hotel. She then went to Quest Diagnostics at an unknown time. When she arrived, the staff advised that they were not accepting walk-ins, so she decided to go to another location. After arriving at the second location there was a long line, so she contacted the first location and was able to make an appointment for 1:00 p.m. that day. The mother returned home between 11:00 a.m. and noon and all the children were eating cereal. The 4-year-old had wet the bed the previous night and once the father discovered that he had he told the child to stand in the corner. At approximately 2:00 p.m. the mother recalled the (now deceased) child was sitting and watching television. Suddenly he got up and entered the bathroom. After an unknown amount of time had passed, the mother went to use the bathroom and found the child with his head down in the toilet as if he was drinking the toilet water (something he had never done). The child was told to stand in the corner as punishment. The mother recalled as she made her way back from the bathroom, the father got up, stopped the child from going to the corner, and loudly screamed his name twice. The father questioned the child about what he had been doing in the toilet, to which the child replied, "I gotta stop." From the bathroom, the mother heard a loud hand clap. When the mother exited the bathroom, she observed the child was lying on the floor on his back. The father then picked up the child and took him into the bathroom to give him as shower. Not long after that the father exited the bathroom, panicking, and telling her to call for an ambulance. The mother asked the father what had happened, but the father did not answer. The father picked the child up and held him like a baby. The mother heard a faint sigh coming from the child and the father laid him back on the ground. The mother called 911 and dispatch walked them through CPR. Law Enforcement and Emergency Medical Services responded to the hotel. The child was transported to Advent Health Celebration and then transferred to Arnold Palmer Hospital.

On July 6, 2022, Sergio Rhodes was pronounced deceased at 11:07 p.m.

The child protective investigator (CPI) attempted to gather a 72-hour timeline from the father; however, he immediately stated that he had no memory and couldn't remember what happened because he has been through a lot. The father claimed he could not recall anything except that he had been free, living with his children. The father stated he took his medication, which he takes everyday (Seroquel). The father could not remember what mental health diagnoses he takes the medication for, just that it was recommended to him by a psychiatrist when he was Baker Acted in West Palm Beach. The father stated that when his child left him in the hotel room, he had a heartbeat and that he did everything that the 911 dispatcher told him to do over the phone. The father recalled that after his children were taken to the hospital, an officer that responded to the scene told him that he would let him know what's going on and that he was repeatedly told that the child was okay. He was confused as to why he was handcuffed and taken to jail and mentioned that an officer informed him that, "Your son died and

you did it.” The CPI continued to ask the father questions, but the father would not answer and would stare off and not respond. The father placed his head down onto the table, refused to speak, stated he wanted an attorney, but he did not have one yet. The father was offered a drug screen and he agreed. The father told the attending correctional officer that he would take the drug screen but then stated he wanted to be done with the interview. The CPI again attempted to gather information from the father at which time he advised that he, “did not make him do anything in the toilet bowl” and told the correctional officer that the CPI was attempting to ask the “same questions that the police had asked.”

The mother consented to a drug screen and tested positive for THC and Buprenorphine. The father consented to a drug screen and tested positive for THC.

The Osceola County Sheriff’s Office investigated the death of Sergio Rhodes (221071588). On July 6, 2022, Larry Rhodes and Bianca Blaise were arrested and charged with six counts of Child Neglect with Great Bodily Harm. On July 8, 2022, Larry Rhodes was charged with Battery Touch or Strike. On July 11, 2022, Larry Rhodes was charged with Aggravated Child Abuse. On August 9, 2022, Larry Rhodes was charged with Murder While Engaged in Aggravated Child Abuse.

The autopsy report was received on September 19, 2022, and indicated District 9 Medical Examiner Joshua D. Stephany, M.D., completed an autopsy of Sergio Rhodes on July 7, 2022. ME# 22-09-01333.

Cause of Death: Blunt Force Trauma to the Head and Abdomen

Manner of Death: Homicide

Autopsy Findings:

- I. Blunt force injuries of the head:
 - a. Right partial periorbital ecchymosis/contusion
 - b. Contusion of the left face
 - c. Left subdural hematoma (50 ml)
 - d. Left subgaleal hemorrhage
 - e. Subarachnoid hemorrhage
 - f. Intraparenchymal hemorrhage
 - g. Laceration of the inferior buccal mucosa
- II. Blunt force injuries of the torso:
 - a. Deep soft tissue hemorrhage of the bilateral buttocks
 - b. Laceration of the common hepatic artery
 - c. Hemoperitoneum (400 ml)
 - d. Healing scars and ulcerations of the bilateral buttocks
 - e. Curvilinear scars of the lower back and buttocks
- III. Blunt force injuries of the extremities:
 - a. Contusions of both wrists with underlying deep soft tissue hemorrhage

b. Curvilinear scars of the bilateral posterior thighs

Conclusion: *In consideration of the circumstances surrounding the death, and after examination of the body, toxicology analysis, microscopic analysis, and review of available medical records, it is my opinion that the death of Sergio Rhodes, a 6-year-old black male found unresponsive and subsequently transported to the hospital, is the result of blunt force trauma of the head and abdomen.*

On December 13, 2022, the Department of Children and Families' investigation was closed with:

- Verified Findings of Death, Physical Injury, Bizarre Punishment, Internal Injuries, and Inadequate Supervision as to Sergio Rhodes, with Larry Rhodes and Bianca Blaise as the caregivers responsible.
- Verified Findings of Bizarre Punishment, Environmental Hazards, and Threatened Harm as to [REDACTED] with Larry Rhodes and Bianca Blaise as the caregivers responsible.
- Verified Findings of Failure to Protect as to Sergio, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Bianca Blaise as the caregiver responsible.
- Verified Findings of Bone Fracture as to [REDACTED], with Larry Rhodes and Bianca Blaise as the caregivers responsible.
- Not Substantiated Findings of Medical Neglect as to [REDACTED]

Other Children in the Family:

[REDACTED]


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 four prior abuse reports from 2018 to 2021 [REDACTED]


[REDACTED]



Central Region Child Fatality Prevention Specialist
Kirby Morgan

1/6/2023

Date



Central Region Director of Child Protection
Stephanie Weis

01/06/2023

Date