

Florida Department of Children and Families Child Fatality Summary C-17 2022

Child's Name: Josiah Fenelus

County: Broward

Date of Birth: 09/29/2021

Date of Death: 08/21/2022

Family Composition Chart

Report Number: 2022-251139

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Josiah Fenelus	10 months	Decedent
Tabina Louissant	52 years	Maternal Grandmother

Circumstances Surrounding Death

On 08/21/2022, a report was received by the Hotline stating that this 10-month-old infant was found unresponsive by the grandmother. 911 was contacted and emergency medical services transported the infant to Broward General Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased.

The infant resided with his parents and two older siblings; however, on the two nights preceding the incident, the infant was being cared for by his grandmother at the grandmother's home. The grandmother and an aunt were in the home when the incident occurred.

In the hours leading up to the incident, the grandmother woke up around 5:00am to feed the infant. She noticed he was congested and stated that she gave him some cough medicine. The infant fell back to sleep shortly after he was fed. Next, around 9:30am, the grandmother checked on the infant and found him unresponsive on the pallet on the floor where he was sleeping. The grandmother screamed out for help and the aunt assisted. The aunt called 911 and the grandmother initiated CPR. Emergency medical services took over resuscitation efforts when they arrived at the home.

The grandmother did not have a crib or Pack n' Play for the infant, so she made a pallet on the floor in the living room and the grandmother slept next to the infant on the couch. The pallet was made out of blankets and a comforter.

The infant wasn't yet walking but could "cruise." He was able to pull himself up and walk around with the assistance of holding onto something such as the sofa.

The grandmother tested negative for all substances when it was requested she submit to a random drug screen.

The Broward County Medical Examiner's Office completed an autopsy. The cause of death was determined to be "Cyproheptadine Toxicity" and the manner as "Homicide." The

pathologist opined that, “This 10-month-old male had reportedly been experiencing a runny nose and cough for approximately five days. The decedent was sleeping on a comforter on the floor when he awoke crying and was given a bottle prepared by his caretaker. The decedent went back to sleep and was later found unresponsive lying supine on the comforter. Fire Rescue responded and transported him to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased shortly after arrival. There was no significant skeletal injury identified at autopsy. The autopsy exam was significant for cerebral edema (swelling of the brain), pulmonary congestion (heavy lungs), and a small subgaleal hemorrhage of the occipital scalp. Toxicological analysis revealed the presence of Cyproheptadine which is a serotonin and histamine antagonist with both anticholinergic and sedative effects. Within the United States, Cyproheptadine is a prescription drug which is not approved for use in those younger than 2 years old.”

The Broward County Sheriff’s Office has jurisdiction over the case. The grandmother was arrested for aggravated manslaughter of a child. The police report states that the parents told the grandmother that she is not allowed to give the infant any “home remedies” that were common practice in the grandmother’s native country. However, the grandmother gave the infant Apetamin in his bottle, which is an illegally imported antihistamine drug that may increase appetite and thus is used for weight gain. The report also states that at the scene, on the day of the incident, the grandmother didn’t tell the Detective about the medication that she gave the infant, but instead told the Detective that a bottle found with yellow-like fluid was a tea that the grandmother prepared for the infant. At the time the DCF investigation was closed, the criminal charges remained pending.

Based on the information indicated above, the report was closed with “verified” findings for both the death and inadequate supervision maltreatments, with the grandmother as the identified caregiver responsible.

Other Children in the Family

There are no other children in the home of the grandmother. The infant has two older siblings who reside in the home of the parents.

Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

No prior reports were located on the family.

Signature Page:

Tausha Schreiber
Tausha Schreiber, Child Fatality Prevention Specialist

03/21/2025
Date


Denise Foster, Region Program Manager

03/24/2025
Date