

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Sofia Cardona

County: St. Johns

Date of Birth: September 14, 2011

Date of Death: December 30, 2022

Report Number: 2022-398277

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Sofia Cardona	11	Deceased Child
Viviana Toms	44	Mother
Giovanni Cardona	51	Father

1. Circumstances Surrounding Death

On May 7, 2022, this 11-year-old child was shot by the father. He then shot and killed himself. Law Enforcement (LE) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrived, and transported the child to Wolfson Children's Hospital where, despite life-saving efforts, she was pronounced deceased at 3:22pm.

On the day of the incident the father found out that the mother was making plans to leave/divorce him and he asked her to stop the divorce. The father suggested they go to marriage counseling and the mother told him that he needed to have individual counseling. The father then began telling the mother that if she continued with the divorce, he would "take everything away from her, he would take all of her money and leave her with nothing and take custody of Sofia." The mother decided to leave the house to end the argument. The child was sleeping when the mother left. After the mother left, the father continued to call and text her numerous times, but she ignored him. The father then called a paternal great-aunt to say "goodbye" and then proceeded to shoot the child in the head, before shooting himself. The aunt notified LE once she received the father's call.

The investigation revealed that in 2016, the father's adult son committed suicide. The father refused any counseling and coped by drinking alcohol. The father stopped working and did not return until two months prior to this incident. His job as a correction's officer was in Connecticut (where the family previously resided), so he moved, and the mother and child stayed in Florida. The father was supposed to stay there for six months. During this time, he continuously texted the child inappropriate and offensive statements about the mother. The mother obtained a temporary restraining order against the father in November; however, seven days later he convinced the mother to drop the injunction because he could lose his employment. On Christmas Eve, the father arrived at the home without any notice because he wanted to spend the holiday with the child.

Throughout the marriage, the father was abusive to the mother and held power and control over her. The mother attempted to leave and divorce the father several times, but she ultimately stayed because the father threatened to gain full custody of the child. The mother had obtained a restraining order in the recent past but eventually dropped it because of the father's threats. Family members reported they had concerns that the father may kill the mother, but never had concerns he would ever hurt the child.

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The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office opened an investigation which was closed on May 2, 2023, without pursuing criminal charges because the father was deceased.

The Medical Examiner completed an autopsy and determined the cause of death as gunshot wound of the head with perforation of skull and brain. The manner of death was a homicide (shot by other person with a handgun).

The First Coast Child Protection Team (CPT) completed a medical records review on December 23, 2023. CPT had positive findings for physical abuse, stating "Gunshot wound committed by the father who then killed himself with a handgun also. This was in the context of the father not wanting a divorce and arguing with the mother."

Based on the information obtained during the investigation, DCF St. Johns County Child Protective Investigations closed the investigation on March 20, 2024, with verified findings of death, physical injury and intimate partner violence threatens child and identified the father as the caregiver responsible. Additionally, there were not substantiated findings of failure to protect by the mother.

Other Children in the Family

The child had one adult sibling at the time of death who did not reside in the home.

2. Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

The family was involved in one investigation in 2016 due to an altercation between the mother and the paternal grandmother. The investigation was closed with not substantiated findings of family violence threatens child.



Melissa Stanley, MSMFT, MBA, CPP
Child Fatality Prevention Specialist

5/2/24

Date

Racquel Courts

Racquel Courts
NER Program Manager

5/9/2024

Date