

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Daniel Aaron Hernandez-Zamora
Matthew Lucatero

County: Polk

Date of Birth: 11/26/2018
05/08/2014

Date of Death: 12/30/2022

Report Number: 2023-006512

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Daniel Hernandez-Zamora	4 years old	Child Victim
Matthew Lucatero	9 years old	Child Victim
Ortilla Lucatero-Zamora	35 years old	Mother (also deceased)

Circumstances Surrounding Death

On January 7, 2023, a report was received indicating the 4-year-old and 9-year-old children passed away after their mother drove their vehicle into a lake on December 30, 2022.

The maternal uncle provided the following information regarding the events that happened with the mother in the week prior to the incident. He stated it seemed like his sister was "losing her mind". She had an apartment for her and the boys. Their father has no relationship with them, and this seemed to cause her stress. She would say things about her seeing things and people were following her. About two months prior her car got shot up at her apartment and that made everything worse. After that she did not feel safe and would move around to family members' houses. She would feel like someone was chasing her. Two weeks prior to the event they could not get her to stay still. He was trying to get her into a place for help in Sarasota. They got her a spot, but at the last minute his sister refused to go, and then she appeared to be doing fine.

On December 26, 2022, his sister had a breakdown and did not know where she was. He took her to her apartment and then she seemed normal, and he talked to her about how they would go get help the next day. She was stressed about getting help but agreed. The next day he called law enforcement and said that she needed help but was told that she was old enough to make her own decisions if she did not want the help. They took her to Peace River in Bartow and they stated that they did not take walk ins and that they would have to go to Lakeland. They then went to Peace River in Lakeland, and they informed him that if his sister did not sign the forms, they could not help her. She was afraid they would take the children away from her if she got help and she refused to sign any papers. After they dropped her off at her home in Wauchula, they

did not see or hear from her again. On December 29, 2022, they could not find her, could not get a hold of her, and they filed a missing person's report with law enforcement at 6:30 p.m.

On December 30, 2022, at approximately 5:30 a.m., the mother was seen intentionally driving her vehicle into Lake Wire in Lakeland, FL, with her two children in the car.

911 was called and law enforcement responded to the scene. The detective stated that there was no evidence of anything debilitating that caused the mother to drive into the lake. The 9-year-old was found in the front seat and the mother and 4-year-old were found in the back of the vehicle. A bystander who witnessed the incident stated that she observed the vehicle make a U-Turn to travel north on Sikes Boulevard; the bystander looked in the rearview mirror and saw the car jump the curve in the road. The bystander made a U-Turn and when she passed the lake, she saw lights in the water. The initial officer on scene observed the trunk of the vehicle approximately 10 to 15 feet into the lake and it appeared to be running with the lights still on. There were no signs of life inside the vehicle. There were no tire tracks observed in the grass, no skid marks on the concrete, and no damage to any signs around the lake.

On December 30, 2022, Daniel Hernandez-Zamora, Matthew Lucatero, and Otilia Lucatero-Zamora were pronounced deceased at 5:36 a.m.

The Lakeland Police Department investigated the death of Daniel Hernandez-Zamora and Matthew Lucatero (2022-00158973). Their case was closed as a murder-suicide.

The death certificate was received on January 18, 2023, and indicated District 10 Medical Examiner Vera V. Volnikh, M.D., signed and certified the death certificate for Daniel Hernandez-Zamora on January 4, 2023. ME# 22-10-FA-852.

Cause of Death: Drowning

Manner of Death: Homicide

The death certificate was received on January 18, 2023, and indicated District 10 Medical Examiner Vera V. Volnikh, M.D., signed and certified the death certificate for Matthew Lucatero on January 4, 2023. ME# 22-10-FA-851.

Cause of Death: Drowning

Manner of Death: Homicide

The death certificate was received on January 18, 2023, and indicated District 10 Medical Examiner Vera V. Volnikh, M.D., signed and certified the death certificate for Otilia Lucatero Zamora on January 4, 2023. ME# 22-10-FA-850.

Cause of Death: Drowning

Manner of Death: Suicide

On May 18, 2023, the Department of Children and Families' investigation was closed with:

- Verified Findings of Death, Asphyxiation, and Inadequate Supervision as to Daniel Hernandez-Zamora and Matthew Lucatero.

Other Children in the Family:


There were no other children in the mother's care.

Summary of Current Agency Involvement with Family

The family did not have any open services.


Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

The family does not have any prior abuse report history.



Central Region Child Fatality Prevention Specialist
Kirby Morgan

5/22/23
Date



Central Region Director of Child Protection

5/22/23
Date