

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: [REDACTED]

County: Alachua

Date of Birth: February 14, 2019

Date of Death: March 2, 2023

Report Number: 2023-072794

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
[REDACTED]	4	Deceased Child
[REDACTED]	26	Mother
[REDACTED]	27	Father

1. Circumstances Surrounding Death

On March 2, 2023, this four-year-old toddler was found unresponsive in a retention pond by the father. The father pulled him out and began cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) while 911 was contacted. Law Enforcement (LE) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrived and transported the child to UF Health Shands Hospital where, despite life-saving efforts, he was pronounced deceased at 6:12pm.

At the time of the incident, the family was living in the back room of a pet grooming salon, which was located in a business plaza. The family had been taking a nap when the mother woke up and decided to go get something to eat. When she left, around 4:45pm, the father and child were still sleeping. . The mother had originally stated that she locked everything when she left including a baby gate; however, this was later determined to not be true. When the mother got home, she asked the father where the toddler was, and they began searching for him. About 15 minutes later, the father discovered the toddler in the retention pond behind the plaza.

When law enforcement arrived, they searched the family's living area. They located a baggie with right white crystal powder and a Ziploc bag with marijuana and various drug paraphernalia. An electronic tablet with a white powder residue in a rolled-up dollar bill was located in a plastic storage box. The father admitted to being addicted to depressants since he was a teenager, and he appeared to be under the influence when talking to the officers. The father submitted to both a urinalysis and blood draw and the results were positive for methamphetamines. The white crystal powder was tested by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and was positive to be methamphetamines.

The Gainesville Police Department opened an investigation and determined the death was due to negligence by the parents. On November 3, 2023, sworn complaints for manslaughter were filed for both the mother and the father. On January 4, 2024, the State Attorney's Office dismissed all charges.

The Medical Examiner completed an autopsy and determined the cause of death as drowning and the manner of death as an accident.

The Child Protection Team (CPT) declined to do a medical records review.

Based on the information obtained during the investigation, DCF Alachua County Child Protective Investigations closed the investigation on April 10, 2024, with not substantiated findings of death, inadequate supervision, and environmental hazards, and verified findings of substance misuse-illicit drugs.

Other Children in the Family

The toddler had no siblings at the time of the death.

2. Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

The family has been involved in four prior and investigations between 2020 and 2022.

A 2022 investigation was closed with not substantiated findings of household violence threatens child. In 2021, an investigation was closed with no indicators of inadequate supervision.

In 2020 there were two investigations opened. An investigation closed in February with not substantiated findings of household violence threatens child. A March investigation was open because the mother was testing positive for methamphetamine, amphetamine, and THC while she was in substance-abuse treatment but denied using any drugs. The mother stated she had anxiety and instead of taking prescribed medication, she chose to use marijuana instead. Due to the on-going drug use, impending danger was identified, and the family was referred to in-home non-judicial case management. The father completed a domestic violence assessment and it recommended counseling for the father. The mother completed a Family Intervention Services (FIS) assessment. She began services but then discontinued after a confrontation with the FIS worker. The mother was supposed to have a mental health assessment, but did not complete this stating work as a reason she could not attend. Services were closed after four months sighting the child as safe because the mother tested negative on all drug screens, even though she did not complete any services.



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

11/26/24

Date

Racquel Courts
Racquel Courts
NER Program Manager

2/13/2025

Date