

## Matteo Charlebois

Matteo was born on October 27, 2021 and died 92 days later in Lycoming County.

At the time of his birth, Matteo apparently was the subject of a notification to Pennsylvania's ChildLine related to parental substance use and possibly prenatal substance exposure as well as early expressed concerns about risks associated with unsafe sleep. Documents are not clear on how ChildLine processed the notification, but it does appear the Lycoming County child welfare agency proceeded consistent with a general protective services (GPS) or what is routinely understood as a differential response for a non-abuse case. Documents reveal that the child welfare agency stipulated that it maintained some ongoing contact (or attempted contact) with the mother over the course of Matteo's abbreviated life. Publicly available materials suggest Matteo was in the sole care and custody of the mother and that she was "avoiding scheduled home visits".

As part of a criminal case following Matteo's death, the mother's attorney sought review of the child welfare records citing the mother's confusion about her status with the child welfare agency ("receiving Outreach Services and not had an open Assessment with the Agency").

On the day that Matteo died, a woman invited by the mother to visit her contacted law enforcement citing concerns that the mother was under the influence, "nodding off" while feeding Matteo and that the infant's head had been hit against a changing table. Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) troopers responded to Matteo's home following this call regarding a "welfare check". PSP wrote that the infant was "awake, alert and not in need of medical attention". Matteo remained in his mother's care. Several hours later it appears that someone affiliated with the child welfare agency came for a previously scheduled visit. The person "knocked on the door, but no one responded." This person reported they "did hear the victim child crying, but only for a brief time" and left a "card on the door" believing the mother "had calmed the victim child."

A few hours later (approximately 8 hours following the PSP's initial "welfare check"), PSP and emergency medical professionals would be summoned to the home due to an infant being in "cardiac arrest". Matteo's mother "advised" emergency medical services that they should administer Narcan to the infant. Matteo would be transported to and declared dead at the hospital.

A forensic pathologist determined the death was due to natural causes related to complications from COVID-19, while also noting a low level of methamphetamine in the infant's blood. The infant's death was substantiated as physical abuse and the mother named as the perpetrator.

In November 2024, the mother reportedly pleaded no contest to a charge of endangering the welfare of children (EWOC).<sup>1</sup> The mother earlier sought to have the EWOC charge dismissed citing the infant's autopsy results, but a county judge determined that the Commonwealth had demonstrated the case should proceed given that the defendant "was aware that the child was in circumstances that threatened his physical or psychological welfare." The judge further wrote, "The Defendant admitted to being a drug addict who utilized fentanyl in the apartment she shared with the child. The Defendant, as the sole caregiver for the child, cared for him while under the influence of methamphetamines and/or fentanyl. She had both drugs in the room where the child slept, syringes of meth under the baby swing, and a pillow in the baby's crib which tested positive for heroin particles. Both the Defendant and the child had methamphetamines in their systems."

Lycoming County's Act 33 (Child Fatality) Team provided a few recommendations "for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse":

- More encompassing laws surrounding drug and alcohol-exposed infants. Lycoming County's near fatalities and fatalities are mostly attributed to drug use. Confidentiality laws around drug and

alcohol services limit the information being shared that could prevent some of these tragedies and not by removing children, but by implementing needed services to support the parents.

- Regular informational and educational meetings between the heads of Agencies including CYS, law enforcement, mental health, drug and alcohol, and others to improve cooperation as well as the most productive ways to engage each other to help the communities we serve and to prevent child abuse.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services recommended:

- Law enforcement to alert CYS when welfare checks have been requested for safety concerns for a child. Outreach services to call the police if a client who has a history of drug abuse and has been avoiding scheduled home visits call the police and requests a welfare visit.

### **Documents reviewed by C4CJ**

1. January 28, 2022 reporting by PennLive: Pa. infant whose death is under investigation was born with drugs in his system: prosecutor. Retrieved at <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2022/01/pa-infant-whose-death-is-under-investigation-was-born-with-drugs-in-his-system-prosecutor.html>.
2. A (de-identified) summary of for a 2-month-old male reported to have died in Lycoming County on January 26, 2022, as published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services for child fatalities substantiated as child abuse or neglect in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2022. <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/quarterly-summaries-child-abuse.html>
3. The fairly redacted fatality Report for Matteo Charlebois issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (note this is often referred to as the Act 33 report). Retrieved at [https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/ocyf/documents/reports/Charlebois\\_Death\\_012622\\_NE.pdf](https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dhs/documents/docs/ocyf/documents/reports/Charlebois_Death_012622_NE.pdf)
4. March 17, 2022 application for a search warrant filed by Trooper J. Reiner related to “Two (2) Cellular Smartphones issued to Crystal Minnier and Tammy Bradley by the Lycoming County Children and Youth. To include all contact, messages, phone calls and other means of contact between Tallia Charlebois, Crystal Minnier and Tammy Bradley between 10/27/2021 and 1/26/2022.” Police Incident #PA2022-106170. Retrieved at <https://www.lycosecrets.org/storage/2023/10/PSP-Search-warrant-for-Crystal-Minnier-and-Tammy-Bradley-cell-phones-March-17-2022.pdf>.
5. March 18, 2022 media report (*Police file warrant for Lycoming County Children & Youth workers' phone records*) as reported by NorthCentralPA ([https://www.northcentralpa.com/news/police-file-warrant-for-lycoming-county-children-youth-workers-phone-records/article\\_3e0e2954-a6ec-11ec-a348-fb99088b650d.html](https://www.northcentralpa.com/news/police-file-warrant-for-lycoming-county-children-youth-workers-phone-records/article_3e0e2954-a6ec-11ec-a348-fb99088b650d.html)).
6. January 2024 Lycoming County Court decision on filed pretrial omnibus motion - <https://www.lycolaw.org/uploads/opinions/2024-charlebois010324t.pdf>
7. Criminal Court Docket Number: CP-41-CR-0000241-2022.

### **Timeline of events based on reviewed documents**

#### **10/27/2021 - Matteo is born**

**10/27/2021** – There appears to immediate be a report to the county child welfare related to “substance use by a parent/caregiver” and Act 33 report references “methamphetamine (admitted to taking one Adderall that was not prescribed to [redacted]), marijuana, and [redacted] had concerns about [redacted] falling asleep with the victim child on two separate occasions while admitted.” Act 33 also notes “co-sleeping was addressed numerous times”. When the child welfare worker connected with the mother it appears there was also some disclosure regarding a “history of heroin use”.

Matteo Charlebois (2022, Lycoming County)  
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**12/23/2021** – The Act 33 report indicates that the county child welfare agency closes the general protective services case. “Outreach services” are noted in the report, but the report is written and redacted in a way that makes it difficult to understand the timeline and types and points of contact. There is some note of concern revealed even through the redactions in the report - “[redacted] as they were concerned the [redacted] was under the influence and blankets were covering the victim child while in a car seat.” The report notes “outreach services continued” and that “outreach met twice in the home” utilizing “Active Parenting from birth to 5 years” as the “curriculum being taught.”

**1/26/2022 – Matteo dies**

- 1:00 a.m. After the infant’s death, the mother apparently disclosed to law enforcement that she had snorted “a partial bag of Fentanyl, inside her bathroom, at approximately 0100 hours.”
- 5:26 a.m. Following a call from a woman who had been spending time with the mother who the mother would later describe as “trying to take the victim from her and had been telling her that she was a bad mother,” law enforcement respond to the infant’s home for a “welfare check.” The caller cited that the infant’s mother “was nodding off while holding the victim child and concerns for the victim child hitting his head on the dresser.” The woman who made the call was “interviewed” by the responding Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) troopers. The woman relayed to law enforcement that she believed the infant’s mother was “on some type of drug” and she had been “sitting in a chair, located in the nursery, holding the victim” and that the mother “struck the victim’s head off the changing table causing a red mark on the victim’s head.” The woman also reported that in the nursery she “observed blue glassine bags inside a cardboard box.” Trooper Reiner’s application for a search warrant in March 2022 states, “Responding Troopers ensured the victim was awake, alert and not in need of medical attention. Additionally, when Troopers cleared the scene” the mother “did not appear to be incapable of caring for the victim.”
- 10:30 a.m. – The Act 33 report suggests some entity/professional (redacted) “went out to the family home the morning of the incident”. This person(s) “knocked on the door, but no one responded.” The Act 33 report is redacted but notes some party “did hear the victim child crying, but only for a brief time. [redacted] had been somewhat evasive with services recently, so [redacted] figured [redacted] had calmed the victim child and was not opening the door. [redacted] left a card on the door and sent [redacted] a text with no reply.”
- 1:30 p.m. - [redacted] “responded to the home for a call regarding an infant in cardiac arrest, the victim child and [redacted] were the only persons in the home when [redacted] responded.” The infant was taken to the hospital and “declared deceased” with the infant’s body temperature being “85 degrees”. When law enforcement responded apparently, they reported that the mother “was impaired/under the influence of substances(s)” also that the mother “told them to give the child Narcan”. The Act 33 report again doesn’t indicate the responding law enforcement entity, but a Lycoming County court document includes this reference - “Pennsylvania State Police were dispatched first to conduct a welfare check on the three month old infant son of the Defendant, later that day, for an infant in cardiac arrest. The Defendant allegedly advised EMS to use Narcan on the victim, who was taken to the hospital via ambulance and later declared deceased.” <https://www.lycolaw.org/uploads/opinions/2024-charlebois010324t.pdf>
- 7:00 p.m. A search warrant is executed, and the Act 33 report indicates that the infant’s “blanket, sheets and boppy pillow” were seized and “analyzed” later reported to have tested “positive for heroin”. Also “seized” were “packaging materials, a loaded needle, and other substances presumed to be illicit drugs.” Meanwhile, Trooper Reiner’s application for a different search warrant stipulates, “During the search, multiple items of drug paraphernalia were discovered. The items were described as five (5) clear baggies in a dresser in the bedroom, a glass pipe, a yellow “wipe out” container in a baby swing containing needles and a glassine baggie on the floor next to the bassinet. Furthermore, a yellow

handbag was seized from the floor next to the bassinet in the bedroom. Located inside the handbag was a white glassine baggie with suspected fentanyl and a clear plastic baggie containing multiple white pills.”

- Mother is arrested and initially denied bail (Docket Number: MJ-29303-CR-0000017-2022). Bail was posted on 3/24/2022.

**2/11/2022**- Lycoming County Caseworker Crystal Minnier is interviewed by law enforcement. In that interview, Minnier reveals she was the “assigned caseworker” for the infant’s mother. The caseworker reportedly told law enforcement she “would use her work issued cell phone to contact” the mother “when she needed to meet with her.” Also interviewed was Tammy Bradley, who is also an employee of the child welfare agency. Bradley “indicated she was told by Minnier that the infant’s mother “was a previous Heroin addict.” Bradley said she would use her work phone to contact the infant’s mother “on a regular basis to schedule visits and stay in contact.” Bradley indicated that the infant’s mother “would contact her just before a visit to reschedule visits frequently” with Bradley indicating that “she had to reschedule about half of her visits” with the infant’s mother. Both children and youth workers provided “consent” for information related to calls and texts to be extracted from their “work phones.”

**2/18/2022** - Preliminary hearing held and "one count each of Voluntary Manslaughter, Endangering the Welfare of Children, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, and Possession of a Controlled Substance were held for court”.

**3/9/2022** – PSP Trooper Reiner contacts child welfare workers Minnier and Bradley “to schedule an extraction of their specified data”. At that time, Minnier “state she accidentally dropped her phone the night before and then ran it over with her vehicle.” Minnier also relays that Bradley’s phone had recently “reset”. Trooper Reiner still asked that the phones be provided. He would later be notified that “Lycoming County CYS was no longer willing to consent to the extraction of the data from the cell phones” resulting in the pursuit of a search warrant.

**3/17/2022** – Trooper Reiner of the Pennsylvania State Police files an application for a search warrant seeking access to the “cellular Smartphones” issued to two employees of the Lycoming County Children and Youth agency. Reiner indicates in this application that “information can still be extracted from damaged electronic devices.”

**3/21/2022** – The infant’s death was substantiated as physical abuse by the county child welfare agency with the agency naming the mother as the perpetrator.

**8/15/2022** - Count of voluntary manslaughter dismissed because the infant’s autopsy “verified that the child died of natural causes, specifically COVID-19.” The infant and mother “had methamphetamines in their systems” at the time of the incident.

**1/23/2024** - Lycoming Judge Ryan Tira responded issued an opinion related to mother’s omnibus pretrial motion that included efforts to “suppress statements” and physical evidence. The mother also filed a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus citing that the Commonwealth’s evidence at the preliminary hearing “was insufficient as a matter of law to establish a prima facie case of Endangering the Welfare of a Child.” The related court documents read that the defendant cited that there “was not only no course of conduct, but also that her alleged drug usage did not contribute to the child’s death or cause serious bodily injury. Defendant argues that the Commonwealth’s position would equate any drug use by a parent, regardless of the drug and regardless of whether it is merely in the parent’s possession, with Endangering the Welfare of Children. She argues that mere alcohol or drug usage that may constitute ineffectual parenting is not synonymous with endangering the welfare of a child and requests that the charge be dismissed.” Judge Tira wrote:

*“The Defendant appears to argue that because the autopsy results indicated that her alleged drug use was not the underlying cause of the child’s death, there is insufficient evidence to sustain the charge of Endangering the Welfare of Children. This Court disagrees. The Commonwealth’s brief outlines specific testimony elicited at the preliminary and Omnibus hearings which supports the particular actions of the Defendant as they apply to the elements of the crime. First, the Defendant was the sole caregiver for the three month old child and was clearly aware of her duty to protect the child. Next, the Defendant was aware that the child was in circumstances that threatened his physical or psychological welfare. The Defendant admitted to being a drug addict who utilized*

*fentanyl in the apartment she shared with the child. The Defendant, as the sole caregiver for the child, cared for him while under the influence of methamphetamines and/or fentanyl. She had both drugs in the room where the child slept, syringes of meth under the baby swing, and a pillow in the baby's crib which tested positive for heroin particles. Both the Defendant and the child had methamphetamines in their systems. The Defendant asked the EMTs to administer Narcan to the child, evidencing a knowledge that she was aware that her conduct put the child in danger of injury. Finally, the Defendant refused the help of a friend who expressed concerns about her ability to care for the child while under the influence of drugs and continued to use drugs while attempting to care for him, as evidenced by the plethora of drugs found in her system at the time of the child's death. These actions were so lame or meager that they cannot reasonably be expected to be effective to protect the child's physical or psychological welfare." The Judge continued, "This Court finds that Commonwealth has met this burden when viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the Commonwealth and the inferences reasonably drawn therefrom. It will be a matter for the fact finder at the time of trial to determine if the evidence proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the Defendant's alleged behavior rose to the level of Endangering the Welfare of Children, with the grading enhancements as charged by the Commonwealth."*

**11/22/2024** – Matteo's mother entered a no contest plea to a charge of endangering the welfare of children.

**De-identified summary published by PA DHS**

A 2-month-old male child died on January 26, 2022, as a result of physical abuse. Lycoming County Children and Youth Services indicated the report on March 21, 2022, naming the victim child's mother as the perpetrator. On the date of the incident police responded to the home due to the victim child being unresponsive. The child was transported to the local hospital and pronounced dead. It was determined through the investigation that illegal substances were found in the home and the mother requested the police use Narcan on the victim child when they responded to the home. There were no other children in the home at the time of the incident. At the time the report was indicated, the mother had been criminally charged. The family was previously known to child welfare. <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/dhs/resources/data-reports/quarterly-summaries-child-abuse.html>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2024/11/pa-mother-pleads-no-contest-to-endangering-the-welfare-of-her-baby-who-later-died.html>