

Office of the Inspector General Report to the Governor and General Assembly (Jan. 2023)

OIG2023 #150

Child No. 150	DOB: 06/2020	DOD: 03/2022	Natural
Age at death:	20 months		
Cause of death:	Cardiopulmonary arrest due to complications of cerebral palsy; significant contributing conditions of COVID-19 viral infection		
Reason for review:	Pending child protection investigation at time of child's death; closed intact family services case, and one indicated and two unfounded child protection investigations within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Full investigation pending		
<b><u>Narrative:</u></b>	<p>Twenty-month-old was found unresponsive at home. The toddler was not breathing when paramedics and law enforcement responded. CPR was initiated, and the toddler was transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. The toddler had been born premature, at fewer than 24 weeks gestation, and spent the first eight months of his life in the NICU. He had been diagnosed with several lung and heart conditions and required a feeding tube. The mother reported the toddler had been breathing normally one hour earlier. Emergency responders reported the home was dirty, and the toddler had a bed but there was no indication he slept in it. DCFS investigated the toddler's death and indicated the investigation for death by neglect.</p> <p>Reason for Review: In 2020, DCFS opened an intact family services case after the toddler was born substance exposed. In February 2021, the family's intact worker noted the mother had been inconsistent with program recommendations, and the intact case would be closed unsuccessfully. In March 2021, the intact case had not yet been closed when DCFS received a report that the then 8-month-old medically complex toddler was ready for discharge, and hospital staff were concerned the family could not provide the level of care the toddler would need because the father had not attended training sessions. Hospital staff stated the mother had rescinded all authorizations for them to communicate with the family's intact worker. The CPI administered a toxicology screening to the mother, who tested positive for cocaine and marijuana. One day prior to the toddler's discharge, hospital staff reported the mother had completed training successfully and had no concerns about her ability to care for the toddler. One week later, the CPI completed a nursing referral. DCFS unfounded the investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/ environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect. In April 2021, the intact worker again documented the mother was uncooperative with intact services. That day, DCFS received a report that the mother hit the toddler's then 16-year-old sister on her head, and the 15-year-old and 18-year-old siblings had scratches from the mother's paramour. The three siblings were transported to the hospital for treatment. The 16-year-old reported her mother was intoxicated and hit her 15-year-old brother. The mother stated she had to defend herself from her children, and the stepfather broke up the fight. The children were placed in a safety plan with a maternal cousin. One week later, the 16-year-old sister reported she wanted to go home, and the incident had been blown out of proportion. Hospital staff reported the toddler had presented for all follow-up appointments, and they had no concerns for his care. The mother was in a substance use treatment program at that time and was compliant with her treatment. DCFS unfounded the investigation for cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, and oral injuries by abuse. In June 2021, the family's intact family services case was closed. In February 2022, DCFS received a report that the toddler had missed several appointments despite efforts to contact the mother to coordinate care and address potential barriers. The day before the infant's death, the CPI documented seeing the infant and his mother in a DCFS office and noted the infant was a healthy weight. The mother acknowledged she missed some appointments but stated she chose to do online appointments because the hospital was nearly two hours away. The CPI went to the home the following day and was informed the toddler was deceased. DCFS later indicated the investigation for medical neglect.</p>		