

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

OIG2023 #57

| Child No. 57 | DOB: 03/2019 | DOD: 03/2022 | Undetermined |
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| Age at death: | 3 years | | |
| Cause of death: | Cerebral and cerebellar infarcts from dural sinus thrombosis due to dehydration and malnutrition due to an obstructive trichobezoar of the stomach | | |
| Reason for review: | Pending child protection investigation at time of child's death; three unfounded child protection investigations within one year of child's death | | |
| Action taken: | Full investigation pending | | |
| <p><u>Narrative:</u> Three-year-old was found unresponsive by her mother, who called 911. Paramedics performed CPR, administered Narcan because of concerns of drug use in the home, and transported the toddler to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased. First responders reported the toddler had a bump on her head and appeared severely malnourished. Law enforcement detained three adults in the home. The mother reported the toddler was sick and vomiting in the days prior to her death, but they did not seek medical care. She added the toddler ate her own hair, but they took her for medical care a few months earlier and the doctor did not have concerns about the behavior. Upon autopsy the child was found to have a trichobezoar (concentrated ball of hair) in her stomach that weighed 280 grams. DCFS investigated the toddler's death and indicated her parents for death by neglect.</p> | | | |
| <p><u>Reason for Review:</u> The toddler's parents had seven children together, and each had two children from past relationships; the mother maintained primary custody of the maternal half-siblings and the paternal half-siblings lived with the family periodically. The children ranged in age from 5 months to 24 years at the time of the toddler's death. The parents had a history with DCFS between 2009 and 2020, including five indicated investigations, and four prior intact family cases. In mid-October 2021, DCFS received a report that the toddler's then 7-year-old sister was locked out of the home for long periods of time without food or water, the children were often seen outside unattended, and 10 people lived in the one-bedroom home. The reporter also shared the 12-year-old was seen dragging younger siblings by the hair down the street. Police reported they observed the 5-year-old with a scrape on her jawline and marks on her neck. The next day, the CPI went to the home with the assistance of law enforcement. The mother reported she was pregnant, due that month, and had not received any prenatal care. She stated the children did not have a primary care provider, but she had taken them to the county health department within the last year. She denied dragging the children by the hair and denied any of the older children did that to the younger children. The mother denied corporal punishment. The mother reported the home had three bedrooms; one bedroom belonged to the homeowner, one the parents shared with the toddler, and the remaining children slept in the third bedroom. The parents reported they went grocery shopping regularly. The father would not allow the CPI to enter the home but allowed the police officer entry. The police officer reported no environmental concerns. The parents refused to allow the CPI to take photos, but the then 2-year-old toddler, her 5-year-old sister, and 6-year-old sister were noted to be free of observable injuries. Two days later, DCFS received a report that the 8-year-old sister had been taking food from other students and she and the 7-year-old sister requested breakfast because they had not eaten the night before. The report was taken for additional information and the CPI returned to the home. The mother reported she spent the previous day at the hospital, and the children stayed home from school, but there was plenty of food in the home and the homeowner bought pizza for the children. She reported the children received lunch at school, but not breakfast. The father stated he would ensure the children ate breakfast before school. The parents did not allow the CPI to interview the children separate from the parents but again noted the children appeared free of visible injuries. The verbal children reported having enough to eat and the 12-year-old sister admitted to pulling the other children by the hair. Three days later, the mother gave birth. In mid-November 2021, while the investigation was pending, DCFS received a report that the mother grabbed the 7-year-old by the hair and the father used crack cocaine. The parents again denied the CPI entry and the mother denied the allegations. At the end of November 2021, DCFS received a report that the home had a mouse infestation and left preteen siblings in charge of the younger siblings overnight. The CPI was again denied entry to the home and the mother again denied allegations.</p> | | | |

In December 2021, DCFS received a report that the parents refused a psychiatric evaluation for a teen sibling. The father again denied the CPI access to the home and the teen denied any psychiatric issues. The father withdrew the children from school and continued refusing to cooperate with DCFS. The CPI contacted the State's Attorney to request a court order for services. The request was pending at the time of the toddler's death.