

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

OIG2023 #66

Child No. 66	DOB: 04/2019	DOD: 06/2022	Pending
Age at death: 3 years			
Cause of death: Autopsy pending			
Reason for review: Unfounded child protection investigation within one year of child's death			
Action taken: Full investigation pending			
Narrative: Three-year-old was brought to the emergency room unresponsive where she was pronounced deceased. Medical staff stated the toddler was severely dehydrated, appeared malnourished, was the size of an 18-month-old child, and lacked muscle tone. The father denied the toddler had any pre-existing medical conditions. He reported the family had COVID two weeks earlier, and the toddler did not get better. The parents have been arrested for child endangerment. DCFS investigated the death and indicated the parents for death by abuse and death by neglect. DCFS also indicated the parents for internal injuries by abuse and by neglect; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, and oral injuries by abuse and by neglect; malnutrition; and substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by abuse and by neglect.			
Reason for Review: Prior to 2015, the parents' older children were removed from their care and parental rights were terminated. The parents retained custody of their children born after 2015. The parents had three years free of involvement with DCFS. In August 2021, DCFS received a report that the toddler's then 1-year-old sister, who was medically complex and had been hospitalized since her birth, was nearly ready for discharge, but the parents were uncooperative with discharge planning and visited the sister infrequently. The sister had been born at 29 weeks' gestation, displayed minimal brain function, had seizures, and required a trach and g-tube. The CPI met with the family at home and documented observing three of the toddler's siblings. The parents stated they attended regular training for the sister's care but were unable to attend more than once per week due to financial and transportation constraints. Through the investigation, hospital staff reported they felt the parents had become more engaged since DCFS became involved. Medical staff later reported the sister would most likely remain on a ventilator, and the plan was to have nurses care for the sister in the home after discharge. Hospital staff reported the parents had completed their training, but the sister remained in the hospital and did not have a discharge date. In December 2021, the mother gave birth to another child. That month, DCFS unfounded the investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect.			