

OIG2023 #91

Child No. 91 DOB: 09/2021 DOD: 02/2022 Accident

Age at death: 5 months

Cause of death: Asphyxia due to wedging

Reason for review: Two pending child protection investigations at time of child's death
Action taken: Full investigation pending

Narrative: Five-month-old was found unresponsive between couch cushions by his mother. His maternal grandfather began CPR and the family called 911. The infant was transported by ambulance to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. The mother stated the infant usually slept in his pack- and-play at night, but he had woken up, so she picked him up and they both fell asleep on the couch. She

confirmed a CPI had educated her on safe sleep and provided a pack-and-play. DCFS investigated the death and indicated the mother for death by neglect.

Reason for Review: Five days after the infant's birth, DCFS received a report that the mother left the pediatrician's office before tests were completed for the infant, and the mother did not bring the infant for a scheduled appointment. The reporter noted the infant's bilirubin levels were above the 75% range and could cause developmental delays if left untreated. That day, the CPI met with the mother at home, who reported she had transportation barriers. During the home visit, the mother rescheduled the appointment and confirmed she had transportation. The CPI completed a home safety checklist, found no safety issues, and observed safe sleep arrangements. In January 2022, while the first investigation remained pending, DCFS received a report that the 20-year-old mother, who lived with the infant's maternal grandparents, arrived home intoxicated and initiated a physical altercation with the maternal grandmother while the infant was in the room. Police were called to the home and witnessed the mother grab a phone from the maternal uncle while holding the infant, and the phone hit the infant, causing him to cry. The mother was arrested for domestic battery. The mother told the CPI that she was arguing with the maternal grandmother when the maternal uncle intervened and hit her first. She stated the infant was sleeping during the incident and was not injured, and it was the first time an incident like that had occurred. She denied drinking alcohol but admitted to using marijuana. The maternal grandparents reported they were concerned when the mother returned home because she was not acting like herself, so the maternal grandmother confronted her, the incident escalated, and the maternal grandmother attempted to restrain the mother so she could not hurt anyone. The grandparents reported the infant was sleeping in another room at the time. The maternal uncle reported he had been sleeping during the incident and his girlfriend woke him. He stated he grabbed the mother when the argument turned physical, but the mother kept fighting, and the grandparents also attempted to end the fight. He reported no incidents had occurred before and he did not see the infant during the altercation. While in the home, the CPI did not observe safe sleep arrangements for the infant and was informed the infant slept in bed with his mother. The CPI discussed safe sleep with the family and provided and helped set up a pack-and-play. Both investigations remained pending at the time of the infant's death. DCFS later

unfounded the first investigation for medical neglect with the rationale that the mother brought the infant to his rescheduled appointment and his bilirubin levels had reduced. DCFS indicated the second investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by abuse with the rationale that the mother was witnessed acting recklessly.