

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

OIG2023 #98

Child No. 98	DOB: 04/2022	DOD: 05/2022	Accident
Age at death:	4 weeks		
Cause of death:	Asphyxiation due to airway obstruction in unsafe sleep environment		
Reason for review:	Open intact family services case at time of child's death; two indicated and two unfounded child protection investigations within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		
<p><b><u>Narrative:</u></b> Four-week-old was found unresponsive in her parents' bed by her mother around 7:30am. The mother called 911 and began CPR. The infant was transported by ambulance to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased. The mother reported she awoke at 4:00am, removed the infant from her bassinet, and returned to bed with the infant's father and laid the infant on her chest. DCFS investigated the infant's death and indicated the mother for death by neglect.</p>			
<p><b><u>Reason for Review:</u></b> The father was the alleged perpetrator in investigations involving children with two different women. In August 2021, DCFS opened two investigations involving the infant's parents. The first investigation was opened after an altercation between the parents at the father's home and a report that the mother left the 8-month-old brother in his carrier in the street which both parents denied. The investigation was later unfounded. The second investigation involved reports that the father placed his fingers in the mouth of the infant's then 3-year-old sister until she began choking and gagging, and that the father had previously hit the 5-year-old brother. The father denied the incident and the pediatrician had no concerns. The father was unfounded for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare. In September 2021 DCFS opened two investigations involving the father, the infant's paternal half sibling and that sibling's mother. Allegations included behavioral health concerns of the 8-year-old and that the father was abusive to the child's mother. The half-brother's mother downplayed the seriousness of the incident and refused to obtain an order of protection against the father. DCFS indicated both investigations against the father for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect. The paternal half-brother's mother declined intact family services but accepted community-based referrals. In January 2022, DCFS opened an intact family services case. Recommended services included counseling, domestic violence services, parenting education, and early intervention services for the infant's then 11-month-old brother. The intact worker conducted weekly visits with the family. The mother reported she had an active order of protection against the father and was pregnant with the infant. The intact worker discussed safe sleep with the mother and observed safe sleep arrangements for each of the children. In February 2022, the mother completed parenting classes. In April 2022, the mother began domestic violence classes and the intact worker's visits were reduced to bi-weekly because the family was cooperating with services. That month, the mother gave birth to the infant and the intact worker discussed safe sleep with the mother and confirmed the family had a crib for the infant. The intact case remained open at the time of the infant's death.</p>			