

[Office of the Inspector General Report to the Governor and General Assembly \(Jan. 2024\)](#)

OIG2024 #19

Child No. 19	DOB: 08/2011	DOD: 11/2022	Homicide
Age at death:	11 years		
Cause of death:	Gunshot wound of head		
Alleged perpetrator:	Brother		
Reason for review:	Open intact family services case and pending child protection investigation at time of child's death; sibling of a former youth in care and two unfounded child protection investigations within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Full investigation pending		
<p><u>Narrative:</u> Eleven-year-old was shot at home. Emergency services responded to the home and transported the child to the hospital. Three days later, he was pronounced deceased. The mother provided inconsistent statements to law enforcement and the CPI regarding who was in the home at the time of the incident and how the shooting happened. DCFS took protective custody of the child's 10-month-old and 6-year-old siblings. The child's 19-year-old brother later told law enforcement that he and the child were play-fighting. He stated the child had a knife and the brother had a gun on his hip, but the gun fell on the ground while they were wrestling, and it fired when he picked it up. He stated he threw the gun over the balcony and woke his mother. Police arrested the child's older brother and charged him with involuntary manslaughter, aggravated unlawful use of a weapon, reckless conduct, and obstruction of justice. DCFS indicated the brother for death by abuse (#1) and wounds by abuse (#7). DCFS also indicated the child's mother for death by neglect (#51) and substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60). DCFS unfounded the investigation for inadequate supervision (#74).</p>			
<p><u>Reason for Review:</u> In February 2022, DCFS received a report that the then 10-year-old child disclosed his mother, and her paramour smoked a white substance, the mother kicked the child in the stomach, and the mother left the children with a friend who sexually abused the child and his then 5-year-old sister. The child and his sister denied anyone struck the child and denied anyone touched either of them inappropriately. The child reported the mother smoked marijuana outside. The mother denied the allegations and stated she had given birth a few weeks earlier, and the hospital would have made a report if she used drugs. In March 2022, while the investigation remained pending, DCFS received a report that the mother and her paramour had an altercation when the children were present, the mother used drugs, the child stole from stores, and the mother sent the child to go to the store alone. During a home visit, the child told the CPI he observed fighting between family members and his mother called police. He stated he felt safe at home. He told the CPI he sometimes went to the store alone, which the CPI observed was directly behind the apartment building. The 5-year-old sister denied she saw her mother smoke a white substance, and she stated she felt safe at home. The mother denied she used any substances other than marijuana and agreed to drug testing. She confirmed there had been a fight in the home, she called police, and her landlord banned the other adults from the property. The CPI discussed safe sleep with the mother and observed a bassinet for the 2-month-old sibling. The CPI noted the home appeared clean and did not observe drug paraphernalia. School staff denied concerns about abuse or neglect. The mother accepted intact family services. DCFS unfounded the first investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by abuse (#10) and by neglect (#60). DCFS unfounded the second investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60) and inadequate supervision (#74). The family's intact worker recommended a mental health assessment for the mother, parenting classes, and therapy. The intact worker conducted weekly home visits and noted the children consistently appeared well cared for. The mother attended parenting classes and therapy services through a community provider, and the provider noted they also addressed domestic violence issues. The child and 5-year-old sister attended school. The child's 19-year-old brother was a youth in care from 2019 through approximately three weeks before the child's death. The brother had documented intellectual, emotional, and developmental delays, and his therapist reported he would never be able to live independently. In the year prior to the child's death, the brother lived in residential care and</p>			

his permanency goal was independence. In July 2022, the brother was placed with his grandmother, as residential facility staff reported the brother would benefit from a supervised placement with some independence and he required an adult guardian. In September 2022, the brother's grandmother reported his whereabouts were unknown. One week later, the mother reported the brother had come to live with her. The brother stayed with his mother in an unauthorized placement. Approximately three weeks before the shooting, the court closed the 19-year-old brother's placement case, and the brother remained in the mother's care. Two weeks later, DCFS received a report that the child's 6-year-old sister drank from a cup that contained alcohol. The CPI interviewed the family at home. The mother denied she or any of the children drank alcohol. The 6-year-old stated alcohol was only for adults and she denied she drank anything from her mother's cup that tasted bad or made her feel funny. The child also denied he or his siblings drank alcohol. The child's 10-month-old sibling appeared developmentally appropriate. The intact worker told the CPI the mother cooperated with her service plan but had issues with the fathers of the children. The investigation remained pending, and the intact case remained open at the time of the child's death. DCFS later unfounded the investigation for substance misuse by neglect (#65).