

Office of the Inspector General Report to the Governor and General Assembly (Jan. 2024)

OIG2024 #43

Child No. 43	DOB: 08/2021	DOD: 07/2022	Undetermined
Age at death:	11 months		
Cause of death:	Unexplained sudden death (extrinsic factors identified)		
Reason for review:	One indicated and two unfounded child protection investigations within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		

Narrative: Eleven-month-old was found unresponsive in her crib and the family called 911. The infant was transported to the hospital by ambulance, where she was pronounced deceased. DCFS received a report that the infant's mother and maternal grandmother used methamphetamine and fentanyl in the infant's presence. Law enforcement noted there was a full-size comforter, three pillows, a stuffed bear, and two bottles in the crib. Law enforcement also noted inconsistencies in the reported timeline and suspected the paramour was using drugs. The paramour refused a drug test and refused to allow the mother to complete a drug test or speak with the CPI alone. The autopsy noted the infant's toxicology report was negative for all substances. DCFS investigated the infant's death and unfounded the mother and paramour for death by neglect (#51).

Reason for Review: In October 2021, DCFS received a report about drug use in the home of the infant's maternal grandmother, where the then 2-month-old infant and her 17-year-old mother lived. The CPI made consistent good faith attempts to see the family, but they had been evicted and removed from the home shortly after the report. Law enforcement officers who had assisted with removing the family reported the infant appeared healthy. The CPI continued efforts to locate the family including checking with the local WIC office and the infant's pediatrician. WIC staff reported mother and infant had been there recently and they had no notable concerns and they provided information for the infant's pediatrician. The infant's pediatrician reported the infant was up to date on immunizations and there were no concerns at her last visit. DCFS unfounded the maternal grandmother for substantial risk of physical injury/ environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60). In April 2022, DCFS received a report that the infant's mother used methamphetamine with the infant present, and her paramour had been involved with law enforcement. Law enforcement confirmed the paramour had a history of domestic violence and theft. The CPI met with the mother, who reported she used marijuana; she denied any other drug use but refused to complete a drug test. She added she ended her relationship with the paramour due to his alcohol use. The CPI observed safe sleeping arrangements for the infant. The infant's great-aunt stated that the infant and her mother began living in her home four months earlier, she would not allow illegal substances in her home, and she had no concerns that the mother used drugs. She stated the infant's maternal grandmother used substances and the mother's paramour may have used drugs. The pediatrician's office reported no concerns of abuse or neglect. The CPI referred the mother for intact family services, but the mother did not participate in transitional visits despite the CPI's attempts to engage her. DCFS unfounded the investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60). In June 2022, DCFS received a report that law enforcement responded to the home on a different matter and learned the mother's paramour had burned the then 10-month-old infant while smoking marijuana. The reporter stated the paramour confirmed the incident occurred, but he did not intend to injure her, and he provided care immediately. Later that day, DCFS received an anonymous report that law enforcement responded to the home and found the mother under the influence of drugs, the mother sold drugs, the mother's paramour burned the infant, and the infant did not receive medical treatment, the mother left the infant in the care of known drug users, and the home lacked appropriate food. That day, the CPI met with the family at home and the paramour reported the burn was an accident. The CPI observed a healed burn mark on the infant but noted she otherwise appeared happy and healthy and had a crib in the mother's room. The CPI noted the maternal grandmother was agitated, began yelling while she attempted to interview the mother and paramour, and stated the infant was afraid of the paramour. That day, the CPI

spoke with law enforcement, who reported the paramour called police because the infant's maternal uncle threatened him, and they found no indication of substance use in the home. In the following weeks, the mother and paramour moved into the home of a family friend, and both reported they were employed. The mother declined intact services. The CPI observed a crib and pack-and-play in the home. The infant appeared free of visible signs of abuse or neglect. DCFS indicated the paramour for burns by neglect (#55) but unfounded the mother for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60).