

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

OIG2024 #50

Child No. 50	DOB: 07/2022	DOD: 11/2022	Undetermined
Age at death:	4 months		
Cause of death:	Asphyxiation due to unsafe sleeping environment; significant contributing conditions of adenovirus and respiratory syncytial virus infections		
Reason for review:	Pending child protection investigation at time of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		
<p><b><u>Narrative:</u></b> Four-month-old was found unresponsive on her side by her father, who reported he placed her to sleep on her back, on a mattress on the floor, with a lightweight blanket over her. The father called 911 and the mother began CPR. The infant was pronounced deceased at the hospital. The mother reported the infant, her twin brother, and her 23-month-old sister had been diagnosed with RSV three weeks earlier, but the doctor did not prescribe any medications. DCFS investigated the death and unfounded the infant's parents for death by neglect (#51) but indicated them for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60).</p>			
<p><b><u>Reason for Review:</u></b> In October 2022, DCFS received a report that the infant's father was heard saying he was going to harm the then 3-month-old infant and her twin brother, the twins missed medical appointments, the parents did not bathe the twins or their 22-month-old sister, and the family had been evicted from public housing because the parents grew marijuana. In addition, the reporter stated that two months earlier, the parents left the children with an out-of-state family member with less than one can of formula, and the parents did not answer any calls from the family that week. During the investigation, DCFS received additional reports that the parents fed the children by propping their bottles up. The CPI initially met with the family at the local DCFS office, as the mother reported they were living with the children's paternal uncle who did not want the CPI in his home. The CPI noted the children appeared clean and did not show signs of abuse or neglect. The mother reported that the infant's eye had been surgically removed because of cancer, and they attended follow-up appointments. The parents denied domestic violence, mental health issues, and substance use other than marijuana, and they denied they used marijuana in front of the children. They reported they were evicted because their landlord raised the rent before the mother could return to work following the twins' birth, and they were in the process of finding a new apartment. The parents denied the father made any statements about harming the children. They denied they fed the children by propping up their bottles, and stated they bathed the children regularly. The CPI discussed safe sleep with the parents, who reported the twins slept in bassinets. They declined offers of pack-and-plays. Law enforcement told the CPI the father had been arrested three times that year for incidents of telephone harassment and possession of cannabis in a motor vehicle without a valid driver's license. They reported an additional domestic incident, but there were no arrests. During the investigation, family members told the CPI of an incident where the father threw a rock at the mother, and the mother went to the emergency room for treatment. The children's pediatrician's office had no concerns about the infant's twin and noted the infant recently saw an optometrist for a retina blastoma. While the investigation was pending, the father reported the sister had RSV and the mother brought the twins to the doctor to have them checked for the virus. Later that month, while the investigation remained pending, the infant died. DCFS unfounded the investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by abuse (#10) and environmental neglect (#82).</p>			