

OIG2024 #8

Child No. 8	DOB: 05/2020	DOD: 09/2022	Homicide
Age at death:	2 years		
Cause of death:	Blunt force trauma due to physical abuse		
Alleged perpetrator:	Mother's paramour		
Reason for review:	Unfounded child protection investigation within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		
<p><u>Narrative:</u> Two-year-old died at the hospital where she had been admitted a month earlier in critical condition, after she was removed from life support. DCFS initially opened an investigation after she was found unresponsive at home by her mother's paramour. First responders noted the toddler was bruised and scarred, and hospital staff reported she had new and old fractures, injuries to her vagina and rectum, brain injuries, possible liver injuries, abrasions, and bruises. Medical staff found fluid in the toddler's lungs, and the paramour told them he placed the toddler in the bathtub to wake her up after he found her unresponsive. He stated the mother was at work at the time. The mother denied corporal punishment. DCFS took protective custody of the toddler and her 5-year-old, 6-year-old, and 7-year-old siblings. The siblings reported the mother's paramour did not like the toddler and they saw him punch her. The mother reported that she started working a night shift, and a few weeks earlier, she began to see bruises on the toddler. The mother stated the paramour told her the bruising was from the toddler playing at the park or playing with her siblings. During the investigation, the siblings participated in forensic interviews and disclosed physical and sexual abuse by the paramour and stated their mother knew of the abuse. DCFS indicated the toddler's mother and the paramour for death by abuse (#1); head injuries by abuse (#2); internal injuries by abuse (#4); bone fractures by abuse (#9); substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by abuse (#10); cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, and oral injuries by abuse (#11); sexual penetration (#19); and sexual molestation (#21). DCFS also indicated the mother for inadequate supervision (#74). The paramour is in jail awaiting trial for murder.</p>			
<p><u>Reason for Review:</u> In February 2022, DCFS received a report that the toddler's siblings had not attended school in six weeks, the mother had an alcohol use disorder, and the family's whereabouts were unknown. The CPI contacted the reporter, who stated the toddler's mother said she resided in a neighboring state and enrolled the children in school there. The CPI contacted school in that state and was informed the children were not enrolled. The CPI made attempts to locate the family, finding contact information from an arrest prior to the hotline report and contacted the mother who agreed to meet with the CPI and provided her address. The CPI met with the toddler's 6-year-old and 7-year-old sisters at school and then the CPI visited the home and met with the mother, the mother's paramour, the toddler's maternal aunt, the toddler's 5-year-old brother, and observed the toddler. The toddler and her siblings appeared free of injuries or bruises. The 7-year-old stated she witnessed an argument between her mother and her maternal aunt, her mother left the home, and her mother was later arrested. The mother stated the maternal aunt locked her out of the home, they argued, she kicked in the door, and she was arrested. The aunt corroborated her account. Both denied the argument turned physical. The 7-year-old reported she and her siblings lived with their grandmother while their mother was in jail, then they moved back in with the aunt. The 7-year-old reported the mother consumed alcohol, but she did not know the last time she witnessed her mother drink. The aunt and the paramour denied concerns about the mother's alcohol use, and a collateral contact also denied concerns. The children's pediatrician denied concerns about the family but noted the toddler was a new patient and missed her initial appointment. DCFS unfounded the investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60).</p>			

