

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

OIG2024 #9

Child No. 9	DOB: 12/2013	DOD: 09/2022	Homicide
Age at death:	8 years		
Cause of death:	Gunshot wounds of the head		
Alleged perpetrator:	Stepfather		
Reason for review:	Closed intact family services case and indicated child protection investigation within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		
<u>Narrative:</u> Eight-year-old and his mother were shot and killed at home by the child's stepfather. Police immediately arrested the stepfather. DCFS placed the child's maternal half-sisters, 15-month-old twins, with their maternal uncle. The stepfather has been charged with six counts of first-degree murder. DCFS indicated the stepfather for death by abuse (#1) and substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60).			
<u>Reason for Review:</u> In October 2021, DCFS received a report that the child's stepfather verbally abused the then 7-year-old child and his then 4-month-old twin sisters, the mother was afraid to leave, and the stepfather had a pending child abuse investigation in another state. The next day, DCFS received two related information reports that when the child's stepfather brought the twin sisters to the hospital for respiratory issues, the stepfather was abusive to the mother, so the hospital admitted the twins for safety reasons and escorted the stepfather from the premises. The mother filed a police report against the stepfather for domestic violence. The initial reporter stated the mother moved to Illinois to escape the stepfather, but he followed her. The child told the CPI that his stepfather tried to hurt his mother three times the day before, and he heard the altercations but did not witness them. He stated one altercation happened in the mother's bedroom while the child's twin sisters were in the room. He added the stepfather removed the knob from his bedroom door so he could not leave the room unless he was let out. The child reported that following the incident, his maternal uncle came to the home and picked up him, his mother, and his twin sisters, and he had been in the uncle's care since then. He reported his mother removed his electronics as punishment, but his stepfather spanked him with a belt and had once choked him. The child told the CPI he felt safe with his mother and uncle, but he did not want to be around his stepfather. Hospital staff reported the child's mother was appropriate at the hospital and told them of the domestic violence. A child abuse medical provider examined the twins and noted no signs of abuse or neglect. The hospital discharged the twins to the mother. The mother told the CPI the domestic violence began after the twins were born and she had tried to leave the relationship multiple times. The mother completed order of protection forms and reported she planned to divorce the stepfather. She denied he had ever harmed the twins, but he had used corporal punishment with the child. The mother agreed to intact family services. The CPI's attempts to contact the stepfather were unsuccessful and the stepfather had reportedly left the state. DCFS opened an intact family services case and indicated the stepfather for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60). DCFS unfounded the mother for the same allegation because the mother filed an order of protection and was going to divorce the father, and the child felt safe in her care. The intact worker met with the mother, who reported she no longer wished to participate in intact services. The intact worker discussed the decision with the mother and the intact team noted no new safety concerns with the family. In January 2022, the intact family services case was closed.			