

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

OIG2024 #90

Child No. 90	DOB: 12/2022	DOD: 02/2023	Accident
Age at death:	2 months		
Cause of death:	Positional asphyxiation		
Reason for review:	Open intact family services case at time of child's death; two unfounded child protection investigations and closed intact family services case within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		
<p><u>Narrative:</u> Two-month-old was found unresponsive, wedged between couch cushions, around 5:30am. His mother called 911 and began CPR. The infant was transported by ambulance to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. The mother reported that the night before, she fed the infant, then placed him to sleep on his stomach, with his head on the armrest of the couch and his torso and legs on the seat of the couch. The mother disclosed she was overwhelmed and tired, and recently began taking a new medication. She added that the night of the infant's death, the children's father was supposed to care for them, but he was not present when she attempted to drop the children off at his home. DCFS investigated the death and indicated the mother for death by neglect (#51), but unfounded her for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60).</p> <p>Reason for Review: In December 2021, DCFS received a report that the infant's then 2-month-old brother had not gained weight, and his mother and maternal grandmother did not adhere to his feeding schedule. The reporter noted the mother had been hospitalized, and the maternal grandmother had custody of the children and appeared overwhelmed. In the days following the report, the CPI conducted multiple attempts to see the family, submitted a nursing referral, and spoke with the family's pediatrician who advised the family to use larger nipples and to increase the number of feedings. Later that month, the pediatrician reported the brother gained weight and appeared stronger. The CPI met with the children and grandmother, who stated she helped care for the children while the mother was hospitalized. The grandmother denied she felt overwhelmed as she rarely cared for all the children at once. She reported the brother's weight had improved with adjustments to his formula and bottles. The CPI spoke with the mother, who confirmed she had been hospitalized and received treatment. The parents agreed to intact family services including respite care for the infant's three siblings, then 3 months, 2 years, and 3 years old. In March 2022, the children returned to their mother's care and the intact worker visited weekly. DCFS unfounded the investigation for failure to thrive (#81). The family's intact worker noted the mother was engaged in individual counseling and medication management, the brother attended medical appointments and continued to gain weight, and the children were enrolled in protective daycare and completed developmental assessments that noted no concerns. The children's father was minimally involved during the intact case. In July 2022, DCFS closed the family's intact services case as successful. In November 2022, DCFS received a report that the infant's 4-year-old sister disclosed the father touched her and she was in pain. The CPI met with all the children and noted no visible injuries. The then 13-month-old brother's daycare provider reported no concerns, the 3-year-old reported she felt safe at home, and the teacher reported no concerns. The CPI spoke with the mother, who reported the sister saw her father recently, but he was not alone with the children. She agreed to cease contact with the father during the investigation. The 4-year-old sister completed a forensic interview and medical exam. She made no disclosures of sexual abuse or inappropriate touch, and the medical exam was normal. Detectives interviewed the father, who denied the allegations, and law enforcement closed their investigation. The CPI spoke with the father, who again denied the allegations. While the investigation was pending, the mother gave birth to the infant eight weeks prematurely, and the infant remained hospitalized. The mother also requested a referral for intact family services. In January 2023, the infant was discharged from the hospital. The CPI discussed safe sleep with the mother who reported the infant slept in a pack-and-play, and she had appropriate sleeping arrangements for him. DCFS unfounded the investigation for sexual penetration (#19) and substantial risk of sexual abuse (#22). The family's intact worker recommended childcare assistance, Norman funds, mental health services for the mother, and counseling for the 4-year-old sister. The family was also involved in an in-home parenting program. The mother was cooperating with intact family services when the infant died.</p>			

