

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

OIG2024 #91

Child No. 91	DOB: 01/2023	DOD: 03/2023	Accident
Age at death:	6 weeks		
Cause of death:	Unexplained infant death (extrinsic and intrinsic factors identified)		
Reason for review:	Split custody; one indicated and one unfounded child protection investigations within one year of child's death		
Action taken:	Investigatory review of records		
<u>Narrative:</u> Six-week-old was found not breathing by her maternal grandmother. The grandmother reported she fed the infant early that morning, then placed her on her back, on an infant mattress, on top of the grandmother's bed. The infant's maternal uncle called 911 while the uncle's paramour began CPR. Paramedics transported the infant to the hospital by ambulance, where she was pronounced deceased upon arrival. First responders noted a strong smell of marijuana in the grandmother's bedroom but did not observe any drug paraphernalia. Police obtained a warrant for a drug test and the grandmother tested positive for amphetamine and methamphetamine. The autopsy report noted the infant was placed in an unsafe sleep environment, but she also had renal disease of uncertain significance, both of which may have contributed to her death. DCFS indicated the grandmother for death by neglect (#51) because she placed the infant in an unsafe sleep environment and because she was under the influence of substances that impaired her ability to care for the infant.			
<u>Reason for Review:</u> In March 2022, DCFS received a report of a physical altercation at the home of the maternal grandfather. Reportedly, the grandparents did not want the mother to take the infant's then 15-month-old and 4-year-old maternal siblings' home because the mother had a history of using methamphetamine. Police responded to the home and the mother left with the children. The 4-year-old denied he saw fights between his mother and grandparents. The children's grandfather and step-grandmother stated they did not feel safe allowing the children to return to their mother's care because they suspected she was using methamphetamine. The children's maternal uncle and his paramour stated they watched the children while the mother worked and shared the mother had a history of drug use, but they had no recent concerns. The mother stated that the day of the incident, she locked her keys in her car and left her phone at her mother's home, so her paramour had to drive her to pick up the children. She initially denied drug use, then admitted she used the day after the incident, and she tested positive for methamphetamine and THC. The siblings' father reported he used drugs in the past but stated he no longer used. The CPI initiated a safety plan for the children to stay with their maternal uncle until the mother completed three negative toxicology screenings. In April 2022, DCFS took protective custody of the infant's siblings and placed them with their maternal uncle because the mother continued to test positive for methamphetamine. The mother and the siblings' father both entered substance use treatment programs. DCFS indicated the mother for substantial risk of physical injury/environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60). In August 2022, the mother completed substance use treatment. The service plan also included recommendations to complete parenting and domestic violence classes. In September 2022, the infant's siblings were moved to the home of their maternal grandfather and step-grandmother, and the parents began unsupervised visitation. In December 2022, DCFS reinstated supervised visits for the mother after she tested positive for methamphetamine. The siblings' father continued to have unsupervised visits. In January 2023, the mother gave birth to the infant and DCFS opened an investigation. The placement worker informed the CPI the mother had relapsed in her substance use a few months earlier, but she had completed three negative toxicology screenings and had returned to unsupervised visits. The placement worker reported no concerns about the mother caring for the infant but reported she had not yet met the infant's father. The mother denied any plans to live with the infant's father, and stated he was required to complete random drug screenings as part of probation. DCFS allowed the hospital to discharge the infant to the mother's care because there were no immediate safety concerns. Before closing the investigation, the CPI completed the home safety checklist, discussed safe sleep with the mother, and			

observed the infant's bassinette. DCFS unfounded the investigation for substantial risk of physical injury/ environment injurious to health and welfare by neglect (#60) and the siblings' placement case remained open. The day the investigation closed, the mother tested positive for methamphetamine, but her placement worker did not receive the results until the day after the infant's death.