

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Daltin Miller

County: Marion

Date of Birth: 11/29/2022

Date of Death: 03/01/2024

Report Number: 2024-078630

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Daltin Miller	15 months old	Child Victim
Kelli Starling	36 years old	Mother
Daniel Miller	48 years old	Father

Circumstances Surrounding Death

On March 1, 2024, this 15-month-old child passed away after being found unresponsive in his crib by the parents.

According to law enforcement and their probable cause affidavit, the following information was provided.

The father indicated that on February 29, 2024, the child was having trouble sleeping, had a runny nose, and was struggling to breathe. The child was sleeping in between the parents in their bed, and they were taking turns staying up with the child. The father initially stated he was outside working on his truck at 2:00 a.m. on March 1st, and the mother was caring for the child, but later changed his statement that he was outside at 11:00 a.m. The father reported the child was last known to be alive between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m. During this time, they were all in the bed and he (the father) fell asleep while the mother was awake with the child. The father was woken up at approximately 4:30 p.m. by the mother stating, "I don't know if he's breathing." The father checked and the child was not breathing, they called 911 at 4:14 p.m., and he began CPR.

The mother indicated she was aware she was not supposed to be at the incident location because of an existing court order in the family's ongoing dependency case (see Summary of Current Agency Involvement with the Family section, below, for additional information regarding this order). The mother reported she went to the home at midnight on March 1, 2024, to help care for the child due to him not feeling well. The mother stated he was up most of the night wheezing and struggling to breathe. Between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. the child woke up and was struggling to breathe. The mother struggled with providing accurate time frames, but this appeared to be the last time she knew the child was alive. The mother reported the father was lying on one side of the bed and the child was on the other side. The child was lying perpendicular to the father

with his head toward the opposite side of the bed. The child was lying face down with his face slightly turned to the side. The mother stated she was lying on the floor next to the bed continuing to clear the child's nose and mouth of mucous. The child and the father fell asleep, and she went to the kitchen to get a snack and a drink. The mother returned and fell asleep on the floor next to the bed. There was a blanket covering the lower half of the child. The mother later woke up and realized the child was not breathing and they called 911 at 4:14 p.m.

Law Enforcement and Emergency Medical Services responded to the scene.

On March 1, 2024, the child was pronounced deceased on scene at 4:22 p.m.

Law enforcement personnel observed a nebulizer, amoxicillin, suctioner, and other associated medication in the home. In the master bedroom there was also a small black zippered pouch, and inside were numerous items suspected to be drug paraphernalia, as well as an unknown dark powdery substance inside one of the plastic baggies. The mother and the father denied the pouch and the paraphernalia was theirs. The paraphernalia was approximately 10 feet from where the child was sleeping. A field drug test was completed on the substance in the baggie, and it was presumptively positive for Fentanyl. Law enforcement personnel reviewed video footage from security cameras inside the home. The child is last seen alive on camera at 5:15 p.m. on February 29, 2024. The child arrived home with the father, and nothing was noted to be obviously wrong at that time. On March 1, 2024, from approximately 1:44 a.m. through the time of the incident no one is seen entering the home except for the father or the mother. At 4:11 p.m., three minutes prior to 911 being called, the mother is seen exiting the side entrance with a bag in her hand. She entered a shed on the side of the residence and returned to the residence without the bag in her hand. Law enforcement also observed footage consistent with drug activity. Law enforcement spoke with the Medical Examiner and was advised that there was a significant amount of drugs in the victim's blood, as well as in his liver, which indicated the drugs had been ingested. The parents' address was a known drug location.

Both parents denied using drugs and reported a willingness to submit to a drug screen; however, the mother failed to get urine inside the cup, and the father advised he could not urinate for the screen.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. The maternal grandmother reported the mother has been using drugs "forever" and that both parents have been known to fall asleep while you're talking to them. They do not work because the drugs get in the way. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Per the decedent's birth records. *"DX: exposure to hepatitis C. Insufficient prenatal care, neonatal abstinence symptoms. Newborn affected by maternal use of amphetamines, newborn affected by maternal noxious substances, newborn infant of 38 completed*

weeks of gestation. SGA. CV was positive for amphetamine and methadone. Meconium positive for amphetamine, cannabinoid."

The Marion County Sheriff's Office investigated the death of the child (MCSO-24-OFF-004694). On May 1, 2024, the mother was arrested and charged with Aggravated Negligent Manslaughter of a Child. On May 1, 2024, the father was arrested and charged with Aggravated Negligent Manslaughter of a Child, Fentanyl Possession, Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card, and Theft of a Credit Card.

The death certificate was received on April 24, 2024, and indicated District 5 Medical Examiner Chantel Y. Njiwaji, M.D., signed and certified the death certificate for the child on April 15, 2024. ME# 24-09-0548.

Cause of Death: Acute Toxicity due to the Combined Effects of Fentanyl, Methamphetamine and Xylazine

Manner of Death: Homicide

On August 13, 2024, the Department of Children and Families' investigation was closed with:

- Verified Findings of Death, Substance Misuse - Illicit Drugs, and Inadequate Supervision as to the child, with both parents as the caregivers responsible.

Other Children in the Family:

There are no other children in the parents' care.

Summary of Current Agency Involvement with Family

At the time of the child's death, the family was open to in-home judicial services due to the removal of the child from the parents in December 2022, due to verified findings of substance misuse-illicit drugs by the mother when the child was born. Following his release from the hospital post-delivery, the child was initially placed in a relative placement for approximately four months. He was then placed in licensed foster care for approximately nine and a half months, prior to being reunified with the father only on February 9, 2024.


According to the January 17, 2024, General Magistrate's report, the mother had completed parenting courses and was engaged in substance abuse treatment. The mother had not been drug screened in a few months and her last screens were still positive for illicit substances. The father had completed all pre-reunification case plan tasks, his evaluations had no recommendations, and his only barrier to reunification was the mother still residing in the home with him. The father agreed to move the mother out of the home so the child could be reunified with him. The child was reunified with the father on February 9, 2024, with the stipulation that the mother not reside in the home.

According to the February 19, 2024, General Magistrate's report, the mother had moved out of the home, the child had been reunified with the father, and the case management agency was supervising the mother's visits, with the discretion to allow the father to supervise the mother's visits in the future. The Family Case Manager last visited the home on February 27, 2024, and noted the child had been sick and coughing. The father reported he was going to take the child to the doctor.

Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family


The mother and father have two prior abuse reports as caregivers in 2013 and 2022. The November 2022 report was closed with verified findings of substance misuse-illicit drugs as to the decedent, with the mother as the caregiver responsible.

[REDACTED]



Central Region Child Fatality Prevention Specialist
Kirby Morgan

8/23/24
Date



Central Region Director of Child Protection
Stephanie Weis

8/23/24
Date