Minnesota Safe Passage for Children Child Fatality Report 2023-2024

Name of Child Victim: Adnan Abdullahi

County: Dakota County

Date of Death: 07/17/2023

Date of Birth: 02/07/2020

Age: 3 years

Adult Perpetrator: Mother

Abuse type: Medical Neglect

Summary:

On June 4, 2023, first responders answered a call for 3 year old Adnan Abdullahi who suffered a cardiac arrest at an Eden Prairie park. Paramedics immediately noticed that this child was malnourished, with visible ribs, swollen joints, and poor limb development. Adnan was also dehydrated and had missing and broken teeth. Once Adnan arrived at a local hospital, a CT scan revealed a loss of brain volume, which doctors associated with malnourishment. Adnan died about six weeks after this incident from anoxic encephalopathy due to resuscitated cardiopulmonary arrest.38 Malnutrition and multiple infections were contributing factors to his death. Adnan weighed 25 pounds at the time of his autopsy, which is less than the 1st percentile for his age.

Adnan's mother told first responders that he had been sick for about a week and had not been eating for the past two days. She brought her children to the beach so that Adnan could "sweat out" his illness. Adnan's mother admitted to investigators that she did not bring her children to their well care visits because she was "too busy." Per Adnan's father, "she had a history of not taking the children to the doctors or obtaining medical care when they were sick." Adnan's mother told the same investigators that, even though Adnan was three years old, he did not say anything more than simple words.

Almost immediately, medical professionals flagged that Adnan's mother's story did not match the severity of Adnan's symptoms. Adnan's mother also interfered with Adnan's medical treatment at the hospital. She was caught tampering with his medical equipment to the point where she was once physically removed from a medical device, manipulating Adnan's jaw, causing his teeth to clamp down on his tongue, and pushing on Adnan's chest, airway, and throat area. This happened multiple times before she was restricted to supervised visits.

Police were contacted to investigate the status of Adnan's siblings. They learned Adnan's mother was the sole caretaker of her five children after their father, from whom she was separated, left the country to care for an ailing parent in February 2023. Adnan's siblings described their homelife later through their father: Their mother would force them to vomit by putting her fingers down their throats, put objects down their throat as a form of medication, and told them that doctors are bad people who kill their patients.

Adnan's siblings were also malnourished, with their June 9, 2023, medical records showing a Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 0.15% with 2 children identified BMIs at < 0.01%.39 The Medical SMEs wrote that the Physician's Assistant examining Adnan's siblings did not appropriately document or address their malnutrition. The weight, height, and BMI are recorded for Adnan's siblings, and the BMI for each is well below normal for age on standardized growth charts. It is notable that many children of Somali heritage are tall and slender, yet BMIs at these low percentiles are markedly abnormal and reflect poor nutritional status. The medical records do not include details of a physical exam or any interpretation of the children's health beyond "Well Child Care" for all the children and ear infection and ear wax impaction in individual children. The provider fails to address the low BMIs as a concern for malnutrition, compare the information to previous growth curves, or document a plan of action. They also failed to address the lack of growth as a possible medical concern or consider the possibilities of abuse or neglect in a differential diagnosis. At the time of writing, the Physician's Assistant who evaluated Adnan's siblings is under investigation by the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice. Adnan's father returned to the United States after Adnan's hospitalization and all the siblings were placed in his care on June 24, 2023.

Adnan's mother was eventually charged with one count of Second-Degree Manslaughter, four counts of Child Endangerment, and one count of Harassment on July 8, 2025, two years after the death of her child. We relied on this criminal complaint to establish a timeline and case narrative for Adnan, but actions taken by DCCPS are still unclear. Considering the severity of the situation, DCCPS's decision not to pursue proceedings for the remaining siblings undermines the interim safety for Adnan's siblings until the findings of the divorce and custody matters are resolved. A safer solution would have been for the county to immediately file a CHIPS petition so that they could oversee the wellbeing of the children during the divorce proceedings.

Previous History:

Adnan's father filed for divorce in September 2023 and filed multiple Orders for Protection (OFPs) against Adnan's mother, with one succeeding on March 1, 2024. In that OFP petition, Adnan's father alleged that Adnan's mother would lock the children in rooms for up to 13 hours, withhold food and water from them, force the eldest sibling to

hold other children down during the abuse, and physically abuse the children to “get the evil out of them.” Adnan’s mother would feed the children coffee and candy to keep them awake and “hyper” for school, even though it’s reported that Adnan would get sick due to the caffeine. Adnan’s father wrote that Adnan’s mother ignored Adnan’s symptoms leading up to his hospitalization and made Adnan gag by forcing water down his throat.