Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Pheonix Harris

County: Hillsborough

Date of Birth: 10/15/2022

Date of Death: 1/10/2024

Report Number: 2024-010896

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Pheonix Harris	1 year	Deceased
[redacted]	2 ½ years	Sibling
[redacted]	11 years	Half-sibling By Mother
Tanisha Harris	37 years	Mother

Circumstances Surrounding Death

An investigation was received on January 10, 2024, concerning the death of the 1-year-old toddler after she was discovered unresponsive while in the care of her mother. At the time of the incident the mother and infant did not have stable housing, and the siblings were temporarily residing with a relative.

On January 10, 2024, the mother and Pheonix accompanied the mother's "friend" to a medical appointment in Tampa. Both Pheonix and the mother remained in the friend's vehicle during the appointment, which lasted approximately one hour. Once the friend returned to the vehicle, he noticed that Pheonix appeared lethargic and that she had shallow breathing. Additionally, she was not responding to her name, so he reportedly brought this to the mother's attention, as he believed they should seek medical care. He advised that the mother believed the toddler's condition was possibly asthma related, and she said she would address the issue when they got "home." Of note, the mother and infant were homeless at that time, and they never went "home," instead they went to a 7-Eleven convenience store, where the mother and her friend sat and talked for a "couple of hours." Pheonix remained unrestrained in the back seat of the vehicle. At some point, the mother got out of the vehicle to check on Pheonix and discovered that she was unresponsive. Bystanders called 911 and attempted cardiopulmonary resuscitation until first responders arrived on scene. Paramedics later transported Pheonix to Advent Health Tampa, where she was pronounced deceased at 8:40 p.m. the same evening.

The friend advised law enforcement that he and the mother have a history of using illicit drugs (marijuana with molly), but he denied they had used illicit substances the day of or the day prior to the incident. A presumptive drug screen was unable to be conducted on the friend as he was not located during the Child Protective Investigation. However, it's believed that he was possibly impaired, as he was nodding off during his interview

with law enforcement. Additionally, a baggie containing a white powdery substance was located in plain view inside of the friend's vehicle, and it was believed to contain an illicit substance. Due to the ongoing criminal investigation, the Child Protective Investigator was unable to make contact with the mother until several months after the incident occurred, therefore, a drug screen was not conducted. However, the mother did acknowledge that she had been battling with a substance addiction for nearly 20 years.

Due to the mother's diminished protective capacities, the siblings were removed from her care and placed together with a maternal relative.

Dr. N. Riley with the Hillsborough County Medical Examiner's Office conducted the autopsy on the toddler. His cause of death was listed as toxic effects of fentanyl and the manner of death as an accident (ingestion).

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office conducted the criminal investigation. In January 2024 the mother was arrested on a charge of child neglect with great bodily harm, for which she later pled guilty and received a 5-year prison sentence.

Based on the interviews and evidence gathered during the investigation, Child Protective Investigation in Hillsborough County closed their investigation with the following findings:

Child	Identified Maltreatment	Findings	Caregiver Responsible
Pheonix	Death	Verified	Mother
	Inadequate Supervision	Verified	Mother
	Substance Misuse – Illicit Drugs	Verified	N/A
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Other Children in the Family

[redacted]

Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

There is a lengthy child welfare history between 2006 and 2023 which reflects a pattern of concerns surrounding supervision concerns, environmental hazards, housing instability and the mother's substance abuse. It appears that the mother struggled with cocaine, ecstasy, and marijuana use in earlier reports and opiates in later reports. [redacted] were born

exposed to substances. [redacted], concerns for substance use continued to be a recurring theme.

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Child Fatality Prevention Specialist
SunCoast Region

1-30-2026
Date

Robert W. Wilson

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SunCoast Region

01-30-2026
Date