Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Kaden Wheeler

County: Duval

Date of Birth: February 26, 2022

Date of Death: March 21, 2024

Report Number: 2024-103157

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Kaden Wheeler	2	Deceased Child
[redacted]	4	Sibling
[redacted]	8	Sibling
[redacted]	10	Sibling
[redacted]	13	Sibling
Melissa Harper	42	Mother

1. Circumstances Surrounding Death

On March 21, 2024, this two-year-old toddler died due to drug intoxication.

On March 21, 2024, the mother woke up around 9:45am and realized the toddler was still sleeping which was unusual. She noticed what she believed to be a rash, that ran the entire length of his side, it was pink with dark red spots. When she picked him up he was stiff so she took him to Normandy Park Emergency Room. Despite life-saving efforts, the toddler was pronounced deceased at 11:02am.

The mother initially refused to drug screen but eventually did and was positive for Fentanyl. She denied drug use and demanded a second screen which was also positive for Fentanyl.

The 13-year-old sibling stated that his mother sleeps a lot. He stated he was the one who made the toddler his bottle and put him to bed with the mother, which was the typical routine.

[redacted].

The Medical Examiner completed an autopsy and determined the cause of death as combined drug intoxication (Fentanyl and Xylazine) with other significant conditions as pneumonitis. The manner of death was an accident.

The Jacksonville sheriff's Office opened an investigation and arrested the mother on January 16, 2025, for charges of aggravated manslaughter of a child.

Based on the information obtained during the investigation, DCF Duval County Child Protective Investigations closed the investigation on July 7, 2025, with verified findings of death and substance misuse-illicit drugs, and no indicators of inadequate supervision. The mother was the responsible caregiver for the verified maltreatments. [redacted].

Other Children in the Home

The child had three siblings at the time of death. They were deemed unsafe and sheltered. [redacted]

2. Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family

The family has been a part of 12 prior investigations with concerns of substance abuse to include a 2022 report with not substantiated findings of substance misuse after the toddler was born positive to cocaine. [redacted].

Melissa Stanley, MSMFT, MBA — ***10/24/25***
Child Fatality Prevention Specialist — ***Date***

Racquel Courts — ***1/13/2026***
Racquel Courts — ***Date***
NER Program Manager