

Report Identification Number: BU-20-021

Prepared by: New York State Office of Children & Family Services

Issue Date: Feb 11, 2021

This report, prepared pursuant to section 20(5) of the Social Services Law (SSL), concerns: A report made to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) involving the death of a child.
The death of a child for whom child protective services has an open case.
The death of a child whose care and custody or custody and guardianship has been transferred to an authorized agency.
The death of a child for whom the local department of social services has an open preventive service case.

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is mandated by section 20 of the SSL to investigate or cause for the investigation of the cause and circumstances surrounding the death, review such investigation, and prepare and issue a fatality report in regard to the categories of deaths noted above involving a child, except where a local or regional fatality review team issues a report, as authorized by law.

Such report must include: the cause of death; the identification of child protective or other services provided or actions taken regard to such child and child's family; any extraordinary or pertinent information concerning the circumstances of the child's death; whether the child or the child's family received assistance, care or services from the social services district prior to the child's death; any action or further investigation undertaken by OCFS or the social services district since the child's death; and as appropriate, recommendations for local or state administrative or policy changes.

This report contains no information that would identify the deceased child, his or her siblings, the parent, parents, or other persons legally responsible for the child, and any members of the deceased child's household.

By statute, this report will be forwarded to the social services district, chief county executive officer, chairperson of the local legislative body of the county where the child died and the social services district that had legal custody of the child, if different. Notice of the issuance of this report will be sent to the Speaker of the Assembly and the Temporary President of the Senate of the State of New York.

This report may <u>only</u> be disclosed to the public by OCFS pursuant to section 20(5) of the SSL. It may be released by OCFS only after OCFS has determined that such disclosure is not contrary to the best interests of the deceased child's siblings or other children in the household.

OCFS' review included an examination of actions taken by individual caseworkers and supervisors within the social services district and agencies under contract with the social services district. The observations and recommendations contained in this report reflect OCFS' assessment and the performance of these agencies.



Abbreviations

Relationships							
BM-Biological Mother	SM-Subject Mother	SC-Subject Child					
BF-Biological Father	SF-Subject Father	OC-Other Child					
MGM-Maternal Grand Mother	MGF-Maternal Grand Father	FF-Foster Father					
PGM-Paternal Grand Mother	PGF-Paternal Grand Father	DCP-Day Care Provider					
MGGM-Maternal Great Grand Mother	MGGF-Maternal Great Grand Father	PGGF-Paternal Great Grand Father					
PGGM-Paternal Great Grand Mother	MA/MU-Maternal Aunt/Maternal Uncle	PA/PU-Paternal Aunt/Paternal Uncle					
FM-Foster Mother	SS-Surviving Sibling	PS-Parent Sub					
CH/CHN-Child/Children	OA-Other Adult						
	Contacts						
LE-Law Enforcement	CW-Case Worker	CP-Case Planner					
DrDoctor	ME-Medical Examiner	EMS-Emergency Medical Services					
DC-Day Care	FD-Fire Department	BM-Biological Mother					
CPS-Child Protective Services							
	Allegations						
FX-Fractures	II-Internal Injuries	L/B/W-Lacerations/Bruises/Welts					
S/D/S-Swelling/Dislocation/Sprains	C/T/S-Choking/Twisting/Shaking	B/S-Burns/Scalding					
P/Nx-Poisoning/ Noxious Substance	XCP-Excessive Corporal Punishment	PD/AM-Parent's Drug Alcohol Misuse					
CD/A-Child's Drug/Alcohol Use	LMC-Lack of Medical Care	EdN-Educational Neglect					
EN-Emotional Neglect	SA-Sexual Abuse	M/FTTH-Malnutrition/Failure-to-thrive					
IF/C/S-Inadequate Food/ Clothing/ Shelter	IG-Inadequate Guardianship	LS-Lack of Supervision					
Ab-Abandonment	OTH/COI-Other						
	Miscellaneous						
IND-Indicated	UNF-Unfounded	SO-Sexual Offender					
Sub-Substantiated	Unsub-Unsubstantiated	DV-Domestic Violence					
LDSS-Local Department of Social	ACS-Administration for Children's	NYPD-New York City Police					
Service	Services	Department					
PPRS-Purchased Preventive	TANF-Temporary Assistance to Needy	FC-Foster Care					
Rehabilitative Services	Families						
MH-Mental Health	ER-Emergency Room	COS-Court Ordered Services					
OP-Order of Protection	RAP-Risk Assessment Profile	FASP-Family Assessment Plan					
FAR-Family Assessment Response	Hx-History	Tx-Treatment					
CAC-Child Advocacy Center	PIP-Program Improvement Plan	yo- year(s) old					
CPR-Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	ASTO-Allowing Sex Abuse to Occur						



Case Information

Report Type: Child Deceased **Jurisdiction:** Erie **Date of Death:** 03/05/2020

Age: 2 month(s) Gender: Male Initial Date OCFS Notified: 08/20/2020

Presenting Information

An SCR report alleged on 3/4/20, the two-month-old infant was fed by the father at 11:00 PM and brought into the parents' bed because the infant was fussy. The father put the infant on the parents' bed and propped a pillow under the infant's head to sleep. The infant regularly slept with the parents. At 1:55 AM, the mother checked on the infant and found that he was not breathing. The mother attempted CPR and 911 was called at 1:56 AM. EMS arrived and continued CPR. The infant was transported to the hospital. The infant was pronounced dead at the hospital at 3:03 AM on 3/5/20. The parents had no explanation for the infant's death. The infant was otherwise healthy with no medical history. The infant died from positional asphyxia.

Executive Summary

On 8/20/20, the Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) received an SCR report regarding the death of the two-month-old male infant that occurred on 3/5/20. At the time of the infant's death, he resided with the mother, father, maternal grandparents, and the 5-year-old sibling. The sibling frequently visited his father who lived outside the home.

ECDSS conducted their investigation by interviewing the family and contacting collateral resources. It was learned that on the night of 3/4/20, around 11:00 PM, the father propped the infant on a u-shaped infant pillow to sleep between the parents on the queen-sized bed and he covered the infant with a blanket. The sibling was asleep on the same bed. The mother woke up around 1:55 AM and she discovered that the infant was unresponsive. The mother called 911 and the parents performed CPR until first responders arrived and took over. The infant was transported to the hospital via ambulance, where he was pronounced deceased at 3:03 AM. Law enforcement investigated the infant's death and they had closed their investigation with no charges filed prior to the SCR report being received.

An autopsy was performed, and the cause of death was positional asphyxia and the manner of death was accidental. The final diagnosis was "normally developed infant with no injury or natural disease and positional asphyxia based on marked pulmonary congestion, frothy fluid throughout tracheobronchial tree, thymic petechia, and the infant being found unresponsive and supine on u-shaped pillow with neck flexed and bed sharing with two adults."

ECDSS substantiated the allegations against the parents based on the infant dying from positional asphyxia as a result of the parents propping the infant on a pillow and co-sleeping with the infant and the sibling in the adult bed. The sibling was assessed to be safe in the care of the mother and sibling's father. The family was provided with information on bereavement services and they had not engaged in any services prior to the case closing on 10/26/20.

Findings Related to the CPS Investigation of the Fatality

Safety Assessment:

 Was sufficient information gathered to make the decision recorded on the:

Office of Children and Family Services Child Fatality Report	
 Approved Initial Safety Assessment? 	Yes
Safety assessment due at the time of determination?	Yes
 Was the safety decision on the approved Initial Safety Assessment appropriate? 	Yes
 Was sufficient information gathered to make determination(s) for all allegations as well as any others identified in the course of the investigation? 	Yes, sufficient information was gathered to determine all allegations.
• Was the determination made by the district to unfound or indicate appropriate?	Yes
Explain: The case was indicated and closed based on evidence gathered to support the allega	tions.
Was the decision to close the case appropriate?	Yes
Was casework activity commensurate with appropriate and relevant statutory or regulatory requirements?	Yes
Was there sufficient documentation of supervisory consultation?	Yes, the case record has detail of the consultation.
Explain: Casework activity was commensurate with best casework practice.	
Required Actions Related to the Fatality	
Are there Required Actions related to the compliance issue(s)? Yes No	
Fatality-Related Information and Investigative	Activities
Incident Information	
Date of Death: 03/05/2020	AM
Time of fatal incident, if different than time of death:	Unknown
County where fatality incident occurred:	Erie
Was 911 or local emergency number called?	Yes
Time of Call:	01:56 AM
Did EMS respond to the scene?	Yes
At time of incident leading to death, had child used alcohol or drugs?	N/A

☐ Other

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Working Eating

Driving / Vehicle occupant
Unknown

Child's activity at time of incident:

Playing



Adults: 0

Child Fatality Report

Did child have supervision at time of incider	nt leading to death? Yes
How long before incident was the child last	seen by caretaker? 3 Hours
At time of incident supervisor was:	
☐ Drug Impaired	Absent
Alcohol Impaired	⊠ Asleep
Distracted	☐ Impaired by illness
☐ Impaired by disability	Other:
Total number of deaths at incident event: Children ages 0-18:	

Household Composition at time of Fatality

Household	Relationship	Role	Gender	Age
Deceased Child's Household	Deceased Child	Alleged Victim	Male	2 Month(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Father	Alleged Perpetrator	Male	31 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Grandparent	No Role	Female	52 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Grandparent	No Role	Male	60 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Mother	Alleged Perpetrator	Female	25 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Male	5 Year(s)
Other Household 1	Other Adult - Sibling's Father	No Role	Male	27 Year(s)

LDSS Response

ECDSS began their investigation into the infant's death upon receipt of the SCR report on 8/20/20. They searched SCR history, spoke to the source of the report and law enforcement, and notified the DA's office about the fatality.

On 8/20/20, a home visit was conducted at the mother's home and it was learned that the parents had separated following the incident and the father's location was unknown. The mother reported that she knew about safe sleep guidelines, although the infant slept in the adult bed nightly since he did not like to sleep flat on his back nor did he like to sleep in the portable crib. The home was assessed to be safe. There was a queen-sized bed observed in the mother's bedroom. A portable crib was at the foot of the bed, and there were numerous items in the crib.

The mother reported that the infant was healthy. She said he had been to the pediatrician on 3/4/20, and he had received two immunizations. Around 7:00 PM that night, the mother placed the infant on a u-shaped infant pillow on the adult bed next to her and they both went to sleep. The 5-year-old sibling was asleep on the same bed and the father was not home at that time. The mother stated that the father later told her that he arrived home around 11:00 PM and he fed the infant, changed his diaper, then placed the infant back in bed between the parents on the u-shaped infant pillow and covered him with a blanket. The mother woke up around 1:55 AM and she "nudged" the infant and he did not move. The mother listened to hear if the infant was breathing and she did not hear anything. She woke up the father and they noticed some blood on the infant's clothes and white fluid around his mouth. Both parents took turns attempting CPR and the infant felt warm at that time. The mother did not provide further details about the incident.

The sibling reported that he and the infant slept in between the parents in the adult bed nightly. He shared that on the



morning of the incident, the infant was not breathing, and the infant had blood on his mouth and on the back of him. He did not provide any other details about the incident or any concerns for his care.

The maternal grandparents had no concerns for the parents' care of the children. They stated that they arrived home around 10:00 PM on 3/4/20, and they went right to bed. They had not seen the parents or children at all that day. The grandmother was concerned that the infant passed away due to the immunizations he received that day. The grandmother said she woke up early in the morning and she heard the parents crying. She went to the parents' bedroom and she saw that they were on the phone with the 911 dispatcher and they were performing CPR. The grandmother picked up the infant and tried to get him to breathe. The grandfather said he woke up and he ran outside to flag down EMS.

Law enforcement records showed that they were dispatched to the home at 1:56 AM on 3/5/20. Upon arrival, the infant was not breathing and he had no pulse. Vomit and blood stains were observed on the infant's clothing. The mother and father reported that they were co-sleeping with both children at the time of the incident. Hospital records showed the infant arrived in cardiac arrest and despite resuscitative efforts, he never regained a pulse. Pediatrician records confirmed the infant was seen for a well-child visit and two immunizations on 3/4/20, and there were no concerns for the infant's health.

ECDSS was unsuccessful in their attempts to locate and interview the father. They contacted New York State Department of Corrections, who reported that the father was "on the run" since he was on parole and there was an active warrant for his arrest for an unrelated matter.

The sibling's father's home was assessed to be safe for the sibling. The sibling's father reported that he visited with the sibling often and he had no concerns for the mother's care of the children.

Official Manner and Cause of Death

Official Manner: Accident

Primary Cause of Death: From an injury - external cause

Person Declaring Official Manner and Cause of Death: Medical Examiner

Multidisciplinary Investigation/Review

Was the fatality investigation conducted by a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)?Yes

Was the fatality reviewed by an OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team? Yes

SCR Fatality Report Summary

Alleged Victim(s)	Alleged Perpetrator(s)	Allegation(s)	Allegation Outcome
056190 - Deceased Child, Male, 2 Mons	056191 - Mother, Female, 25 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Substantiated
056190 - Deceased Child, Male, 2 Mons	056191 - Mother, Female, 25 Year(s)	Inadequate Guardianship	Substantiated
056190 - Deceased Child, Male, 2 Mons	056192 - Father, Male, 31 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Substantiated
056190 - Deceased Child, Male, 2 Mons	056192 - Father, Male, 31 Year(s)	Inadequate Guardianship	Substantiated

CPS Fatality Casework/Investigative Activities

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	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
All children observed?	\boxtimes			
When appropriate, children were interviewed?	\boxtimes			
Alleged subject(s) interviewed face-to-face?		\boxtimes		
All 'other persons named' interviewed face-to-face?				
Contact with source?				
All appropriate Collaterals contacted?	\boxtimes			
Was a death-scene investigation performed?	\boxtimes			
Was there discussion with all parties (youth, other household members, and staff) who were present that day (if nonverbal, observation and comments in case notes)?		\boxtimes		
Coordination of investigation with law enforcement?	\boxtimes			
Was there timely entry of progress notes and other required documentation?	\boxtimes			
Additional information: ECDSS was unsuccessful in their attempts to locate and interview the father.				
Fatality Safety Assessment Activities				
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Were there any surviving siblings or other children in the household?				

	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Were there any surviving siblings or other children in the household?	\boxtimes			
Was there an adequate assessment of impending or immediate danger to s household named in the report:	urviving	siblings/o	ther child	lren in the
Within 24 hours?	\boxtimes			
At 7 days?	\boxtimes			
At 30 days?	\boxtimes			
Was there an approved Initial Safety Assessment for all surviving siblings/ other children in the household within 24 hours?	\boxtimes			
Are there any safety issues that need to be referred back to the local district?		\boxtimes		
When safety factors were present that placed the surviving siblings/other children in the household in impending or immediate danger of serious harm, were the safety interventions, including parent/caretaker actions adequate?			\boxtimes	

Fatality Risk Assessment / Risk Assessment Profile



Unable to

				103	""	1 1/11	Determine
Was the risk assessment/RAP adequate	in this case	?					
During the course of the investigation, we gathered to assess risk to all surviving si household?	\boxtimes						
Was there an adequate assessment of the	e family's n	leed for ser	rvices?				
Did the protective factors in this case re- in Family Court at any time during or a	-		-				
Were appropriate/needed services offer	ed in this ca	ase				\boxtimes	
Placement	Activities in	Response to	the Fatality	Investigation)n		
				Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Did the safety factors in the case show the siblings/other children in the household care at any time during this fatality investigation.	be removed		0				
Were there surviving children in the household that were removed either as a result of this fatality report / investigation or for reasons unrelated to this fatality?							
			to the Fatality				
Was there legal activity as a result of the Services F			? There was Response to		•		
	n 111	0.00	0.00				CDD
Services	Provided After Death	Offered, but Refused	Offered, Unknown if Used	Not Offered	Needed but Unavailable	N/A	CDR Lead to Referral
Bereavement counseling							
Economic support							
Funeral arrangements							
Housing assistance							
Mental health services							
Foster care							
Health care							
Legal services							
Family planning							

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Parenting Skills							
Domestic Violence Services							
Early Intervention							
Alcohol/Substance abuse							
Child Care							
Intensive case management							
Family or others as safety resources							
Other							
Were services provided to siblings or other children in the household to address any immediate needs and support their well-being in response to the fatality? N/A Explain: There were no service needs identified for the sibling. Were services provided to parent(s) and other care givers to address any immediate needs related to the fatality? No Explain: The family was not engaged in any services related to the 3/5/20 fatality at the time the SCR report was received on 8/20/20. ECDSS provided the mother and grandparents with information on bereavement services and they had not engaged in any services at the time the case was closed. History Prior to the Fatality							
	C	hild Informa	ntion				
Did the child have a history of alleged child abuse/maltreatment? Was the child ever placed outside of the home prior to the death? No Were there any siblings ever placed outside of the home prior to this child's death? No Was the child acutely ill during the two weeks before death? No							
	Infants	Under One	Year Old				
During pregnancy, mother: ☐ Had medical complications / infections ☐ Misused over-the-counter or prescription ☐ Experienced domestic violence ☐ Was not noted in the case record to have	on drugs	issues liste	[[d	☐ Had heav☐ Smoked☐ Used illi		e	
Infant was born: ☐ Drug exposed ☐ With neither of the issues listed noted in	n case recor	d		☐ With feta	al alcohol eff	ects or sy	ndrome

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CPS - Investigative History Three Years Prior to the Fatality



There is no CPS investigative history in NYS within three years prior to the fatality.

CPS - Investigative History More Than Three Years Prior to the Fatality An SCR report dated 12/17/16-1/19/17 was substantiated against the mother and sibling's father for the allegations of Inadequate Guardianship and Lack of Supervision regarding the sibling. **Known CPS History Outside of NYS** There is no known CPS history outside of New York State. Legal History Within Three Years Prior to the Fatality Was there any legal activity within three years prior to the fatality investigation? There was no legal activity **Additional Local District Comments** We at the Erie County Department of Social Services appreciate the opportunity given us to review the draft report in advance. We find that the facts, as written, describe the unfortunate events and the actions taken in response. We are pleased that OCFS found that the fatality investigation was conducted appropriately and that there are no required actions related to the fatality. Recommended Action(s) Are there any recommended actions for local or state administrative or policy changes? $\square Yes \square No$ Are there any recommended prevention activities resulting from the review? \square Yes \boxtimes No