

Report Identification Number: AL-21-028

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

Issue Date: Apr 07, 2022

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: Schenectady Date of Death: 10/30/2021

Age: 1 month(s) Gender: Female Initial Date OCFS Notified: 10/30/2021

Presenting Information

An SCR report alleged on 10/29/21, at 10:30 PM, the mother put the 1-month-old female subject child to sleep in a bassinet. At 2:20 AM on 10/30/21, the mother woke up and went to feed the child but when she picked her up, the child was unresponsive. At 2:24 AM, the parents called 911 and first responders arrived. EMS tried to revive the child but were unsuccessful. The child was transported to the hospital where she was pronounced deceased at 2:51 AM. As the parents were the caretakers for the child at the time of the incident, they were named as alleged subjects.

Executive Summary

This fatality report concerns the death of the 1-month-old child that occurred on 10/30/21. A report was made to the SCR on the same day regarding concerns the child was found unresponsive in her bassinet and was pronounced deceased soon after, and the parents did not have a plausible explanation for the death. At the time of the child's death, she resided with her parents. The father had a 3-year-old child who resided with his mother. The sibling was assessed to be safe.

Schenectady County Department of Social Services (SCDSS) coordinated investigative efforts with LE upon receipt of the SCR report. LE did not find criminality and planned to close their investigation without criminal charges. An autopsy was performed and there was no evidence of trauma to the child. The death certificate listed the cause of death as asphyxiation due to or as a consequence of probable airway obstruction from bedding material. The manner of death was an accident. The ME's report noted the overall findings of the autopsy were nonspecific but were suggestive of an accidental asphyxiation by bedding material that may have fallen into the crib and onto the child's face from the adjacent adult bed.

The parents said the child experienced congestion and had difficulty breathing in the weeks prior to her death and was seen by the pediatrician. The parents said the pediatrician advised using a bulb syringe to ease the child's congestion, which the parents did. According to the parents, the pediatrician advised the child to be placed at a 45-degree angle to further assist with the child's congestion as she was too young for medications. The parents propped the child by putting a blanket under the mattress; however, it remained unknown if SCDSS confirmed this recommendation with the pediatrician. The record did not reflect the blanket that propped the child's head contributed to the death. The mother checked on the child around 2:20 AM as she had not cried in 4 hours. The child was in her bassinet with nothing but the mattress pad and the blanket folded underneath it. The parents were unaware of any other blanket going into the bassinet or covering the child's face. The child was unresponsive and 911 was contacted. First responders arrived at the home and took over resuscitation efforts; however, the child was ultimately pronounced deceased at 2:51 AM.

SCDSS gathered information from collaterals including first responders, a neighbor, the grandmother and the sibling's mother. No concerns for the parents' care of the child or sibling were revealed. SCDSS noted the pediatrician's records were consistent with the parents' statements and noted the recommendation to place the child at a 45-degree angle for congestion; however, the records provided to OCFS did not contain this information and it remained unclear where the information was derived from. It was noted the mother was aware of safe sleeping recommendations.

SCDSS conducted home visits and met with family members and the interviews were thorough and appropriate. The Safety Assessments and required reports were completed timely and accurately. Written Notice of Existence letters were provided to the adults timely. SCDSS unsubstantiated the allegations of IG and DOA/Fatality noting that there was "insufficient credible evidence" to support the allegations. The record reflected Notice of Indication letters were provided

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to the adults, despite the case being unfounded.

The adults were provided with referrals for mental health and bereavement services. It was unknown if the adults utilized the services. The sibling was not referred for services as he was unaware of the death. The case was closed on 12/30/21 as the family required no further involvement with SCDSS.

Findings Related to the CPS Investigation of the Fatality

Findings Related to the C15 investigation of the	ic I attailty
Safety Assessment:	
 Was sufficient information gathered to make the decision recorded on the: 	
 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
Determination:	
 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 allegations were appropriately determined.	
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:	
The decision to close the case was appropriate.	
Required Actions Related to the Fatality	
Are there Required Actions related to the compliance issue(s)? Yes No	

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Incident Information



Date of Death: 10/30/2021		Time of Death: 02:51 AM	
Time of fatal incident, if diffe	rent than time of death:		10:30 PM
County where fatality inciden	t occurred:		Schenectady
Was 911 or local emergency n	umber called?		Yes
Time of Call:			02:24 AM
Did EMS respond to the scene	e?		Yes
At time of incident leading to	death, had child used alco	hol or drugs?	N/A
Child's activity at time of inci	dent:		
	☐ Working	☐ Driving	/ Vehicle occupant
Playing	☐ Eating	Unknow	7n
U Other			
Did child have supervision at	time of incident leading to	death? Yes	
How long before incident was	the child last seen by care	etaker? 4 Hours	
At time of incident was super-	visor impaired? Not impair	red.	
At time of incident supervisor	'was:		
Distracted		Absent	
⊠ Asleep		Other:	
Total number of deaths at inc	ident event:		
Children ages 0-18: 1			
Adults: 0			

Household Composition at time of Fatality

Household	Relationship	Role	Gender	Age
Deceased Child's Household	Deceased Child	Alleged Victim	Female	1 Month(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Father	Alleged Perpetrator	Male	29 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Mother	Alleged Perpetrator	Female	23 Year(s)
Other Household 1	Other Adult - Sibling's mother	No Role	Female	28 Year(s)
Other Household 1	Sibling	No Role	Male	3 Year(s)

LDSS Response

On 10/30/21, SCDSS received the fatality report from the SCR. Within the first 24 hours of the investigation, SCDSS contacted the source of the report and law enforcement, notified the district attorney's office of the death and documented a CPS history check. Additionally, a home visit was made, and the safety of the sibling was assessed.

Law enforcement provided information that the parents said the child was congested and the parents were told to elevate the child's head while she slept. Law enforcement gathered information from the medical examiner, who stated the preliminary cause of death would be asphyxiation and believed the child died as a result of an environmental hazard such as a blanket or pillow.

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On 10/30/21, SCDSS interviewed the parents alongside law enforcement. The parents said they had been in contact with the pediatrician prior to the child's death and informed the doctor the child had severe congestion and difficulty breathing as a result of a cold. According to the parents, the pediatrician said the child was too young to be given an effective medication and to elevate the child's head while she slept and to give the child saline drops as well as use a bulb syringe to remove mucus from the child's nose; however, it remained unknown if SCDSS confirmed this information. The parents said they followed the recommendations of the pediatrician. On the night prior to the child's death, the mother fed the child around 10:30 PM, and placed her in a bassinet, on her back, with only the mattress pad and a blanket under it to elevate the child's head. The child's bassinet was located next to the mother's side of the parents' bed. Around 2:20 AM, the mother checked on the child as she had not cried and attempted to feed her. The mother noticed something was wrong, realized the child was unresponsive and 911 was called.

Fire fighters were the first to respond to the call. They observed the mother running down the street carrying the child and she was screaming for help. The child was discolored under both eyes, had no external injuries and had blood coming from her nose. Fire fighters performed CPR until EMS arrived and took over resuscitation efforts. EMS did not observe any signs of life, intubated the child and performed lifesaving measures; however, they were unsuccessful, and the child was pronounced deceased. A law enforcement officer noted the mother said the child's head was slumped over when she discovered the child unresponsive.

SCDSS gathered further collateral information from the maternal grandmother and a neighbor. The neighbor heard commotion coming from the family's apartment and heard the mother crying. The neighbor saw the mother running down the stairs with the child and met the fire fighters outside. The father told the neighbor he and the mother woke up and the child was not breathing. The mother rode in the ambulance and the father followed in his car. The neighbor and grandmother did not have concerns regarding the care the parents provided to the child or the sibling.

After all casework requirements were met, it was determined the family did not require further intervention from SCDSS and the case was closed timely on 12/30/21.

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 referred to an OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team? No

Comments: Schenectady county does not have an OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team.

SCR Fatality Report Summary

Alleged Victim(s)	Alleged Perpetrator(s)	Allegation(s)	Allegation Outcome
059812 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Mons	059814 - Father, Male, 29 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Unsubstantiated
059812 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Mons		Inadequate Guardianship	Unsubstantiated

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059812 - Deceased Child, Female, 1	059813 - Mother, Female, 23	DOA / Fatality	Unsubstantiated
Mons	Year(s)		
059812 - Deceased Child, Female, 1	059813 - Mother, Female, 23	Inadequate	Unsubstantiated
Mons	Year(s)	Guardianship	

CPS Fatality Casework/Investigative Activities

	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?	\boxtimes			
Contact with source?	\boxtimes			
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)?				
Coordination of investigation with law enforcement?	\boxtimes			
Was there timely entry of progress notes and other required documentation?				

Fatality Safety Assessment Activities

	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	dren 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?				
Are there any safety issues that need to be referred back to the local district?		\boxtimes		
		T	Γ	<u> </u>
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	

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Fatality Risk Assessment / Risk Assessment Profile

	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Was the risk assessment/RAP adequate in this case?	\boxtimes			
During the course of the investigation, was sufficient information gathered to assess risk to all surviving siblings/other children in the household?	\boxtimes			
Was there an adequate assessment of the family's need for services?	\boxtimes			
Did the protective factors in this case require the LDSS to file a petition in Family Court at any time during or after the investigation?				
Were appropriate/needed services offered in this case	\boxtimes			
Explain: The family declined funeral assistance and bereavement services from SCDSS				
Diagoment A stivities in Despense to the Estality I	avosticatio			
Placement Activities in Response to the Fatality I	nvesugano	11		
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Did the safety factors in the case show the need for the surviving siblings/other children in the household be removed or placed in foster care at any time during this fatality investigation?	Yes	No 🖂	N/A	
siblings/other children in the household be removed or placed in foster			N/A	
siblings/other children in the household be removed or placed in foster care at any time during this fatality investigation? Were there surviving children in the household that were removed either as a result of this fatality report / investigation or for reasons unrelated			N/A	
siblings/other children in the household be removed or placed in foster care at any time during this fatality investigation? 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? Explain as necessary:			N/A	

Services Provided to the Family in Response to the Fatality

Services	Provided After Death	Offered, but Refused	Offered, Unknown if Used	Not Offered	Needed but Unavailable	N/A	CDR Lead to Referral
Bereavement counseling			\boxtimes				
Economic support							
Funeral arrangements		\boxtimes					
Housing assistance							

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Mental health services							
Foster care							
Health care							
Legal services							
Family planning							
Homemaking Services							
Parenting Skills							
Domestic Violence Services							
Early Intervention							
Alcohol/Substance abuse							
Child Care						\boxtimes	
Intensive case management							
Family or others as safety resources						\boxtimes	
Other						\boxtimes	
Were services provided to parent(s) and other care givers to address any immediate needs related to the fatality? Yes Explain: Bereavement services and funeral assistance was offered to the family in response to the death. History Prior to the Fatality							
Child Information							
Did the child have a history of alleged child abuse/maltreatment? Was the child ever placed outside of the home prior to the death? Were there any siblings ever placed outside of the home prior to this child's death? Was the child acutely ill during the two weeks before death?						No No No Yes	
Infants Under One Year Old							

Did the child have a history of alleged child abuse/maltreatment?

No
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?

Yes

Infants Under One Year Old

During pregnancy, mother:

Had heavy alcohol use

Misused over-the-counter or prescription drugs
Experienced domestic violence
Was not noted in the case record to have any of the issues listed

Infant was born:

Drug exposed
With neither of the issues listed noted in case record

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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

There was no CPS investigative history more than three years prior to the fatality.

Known CPS History Outside of NYS

There is no known CPS history outside of New York.

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.

Recommended Action(s)

Are there any recommended actions for local or state administrative or policy changes?
Yes
No

Are there any recommended prevention activities resulting from the review?
Yes
No