

Report Identification Number: BU-17-032

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

**Issue Date: Apr 25, 2018** 

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								



## **Case Information**

Report Type: Child Deceased Jurisdiction: Niagara Date of Death: 11/12/2017

Age: 1 year(s) Gender: Female Initial Date OCFS Notified: 11/12/2017

## **Presenting Information**

The morning of 11/12/2017, the parents placed the 1yo SC in bed to take a nap. A few hours later, the parents found the SC in the bed unconscious and not breathing. The child was pronounced dead at 10:40AM this morning. Since this was an otherwise healthy child, and there was no explanation for the death, the parents and the Aunt were named as subjects in the report. The SS had an unknown role.

## **Executive Summary**

An SCR report was received on 11/12/2017, with the allegations of DOA/fatality and IG against the SF, the SM and the Aunt regarding the death of the 1yo female SC. The SC died from unknown causes and was an otherwise healthy child. SCR and criminal history checks were completed and reviewed. Based on the review of the SCR history, NCDSS appropriately addressed with the SM about her prescribed medications. NCDSS also questioned the SF about drug or alcohol misuse. The parents denied any misuse of substances.

An autopsy was performed by ME on 11/12/2017. The autopsy results were received and the cause of death and manner of death were undetermined. No criminal charges were filed and no arrests were made.

NCDSS assessed the safety of the SC's two SS and implemented an agreed upon safety plan involving the Aunt, MGP and the parents. The safety plan was temporary to assist the SF who admitted to feeling overwhelmed with caring for the children. NCDSS interviewed the SF, the SM, the Aunt and MGP. NCDSS requested and reviewed all pertinent medical records of the SC. NCDSS also completed all safety assessments and child fatality reports timely and accurately.

NCDSS offered the family bereavement/grief counseling and burial assistance. The family accepted the referral and the Behavioral Health Clinician who worked with NCDSS's Child Fatality Review Team was working with the family and assisting the parents as well as the SS with counseling and referrals to help them cope with the death of the SC.

The case remained undetermined at the time of the writing of this report and the family was engaged in grief counseling.

## Findings Related to the CPS Investigation of the Fatality

#### **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? N/A



• Was the safety decision on the approved Initial Safety Assessment Yes appropriate?

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**Explain:** 

•	Was sufficient information gathered to make determination(s) for	The CPS report had not yet been
	all allegations as well as any others identified in the course of the	determined at the time this Fatality report
	investigation?	was issued.

 $\bullet \quad \text{Was the determination made by the district to unfound or indicate $N/A$ appropriate? } \\$ 

N/A			
Was the decision to close the case	e appropriate?	N/A	
Was casework activity commens statutory or regulatory requirem	urate with appropriate and relevant ents?	Yes	
Was there sufficient documentat	ion of supervisory consultation?	Yes, the case record has detail of the consultation.	he
<b>Explain:</b> The case remained undetermined a	at the time of the writing of this report.		
	Required Actions Related to the Fa	tality	
Are there Required Actions rela	ted to the compliance issue(s)?	⊠No	
Fatali	ty-Related Information and Invest	igative Activities	
	Incident Information		
<b>Date of Death:</b> 11/12/2017	Time of Deat	<b>h:</b> 10:40 AM	
Time of fatal incident, if differen	t than time of death:	Unknown	ı
County where fatality incident o	ccurred:	Niaga	ıra
Was 911 or local emergency num		Yes	
Time of Call:		10:21	AM
Did EMS respond to the scene?		Yes	
-	ath, had child used alcohol or drugs?	No	
Child's activity at time of incider			
⊠ Sleeping	Working	Driving / Vehicle occupant	
Playing	Eating	Unknown	
Other			
<u>=</u>	ne of incident leading to death? Yes		
Is the caretaker listed in the Hou	sehold Composition? Yes - Caregiver 1		

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At time of incident supervisor was: Not impaired.

Total number of deaths at incident event:

Children ages 0-18: 1
Adults: 0

## **Household Composition at time of Fatality**

Household	Relationship	Role	Gender	Age
Deceased Child's Household	Aunt/Uncle	Alleged Perpetrator	Female	38 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Deceased Child	Alleged Victim	Female	1 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Father	Alleged Perpetrator	Male	30 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Mother	Alleged Perpetrator	Female	33 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Female	6 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Male	2 Year(s)

## LDSS Response

NCDSS began the investigation by going to the hospital to see the family on 11/12/2017. NCDSS spoke with medical staff who reported the family was no longer at the hospital. NCDSS interviewed all relevant medical staff, who reported that by the time she was seen at the hospital, the SC had been dead for some time. The attending physician said it appeared SC had died face down. The attending physician stated he did not see the SM or speak with her. It was reported by staff that the SF did not appear to be under the influence of drugs/alcohol. NCDSS conducted a joint investigation with LE, contacted the source of the report and completed an SCR and criminal history check.

NCDSS and LE went out to the home together. NCDSS interviewed the SF, SM, the Aunt, MGF and the MGM. The SF told NCDSS that he had been caring for the SSs for the past week because the SM had been in a car accident on 11/7/2017. She had broken her tibia, had surgery and was not able to go up and down the stairs. The SF admitted to being overwhelmed caring for the children. The SF stated he put the SC in her crib to sleep on the evening of 11/11/2017, at 8:00PM and checked on the SC at 10:00PM. He changed her, gave her a bottle and put her back to bed. He said she appeared normal at that time. The SF said the SC always slept through the night. On the morning of the 11/12/2017, the SF was downstairs cleaning and decided to check on the SC because she should have been up by that time. He didn't recall the exact time but thought it was sometime after 9:00AM. He said he found the SC on her right side facing the wall and her arm was holding her head. He picked her up and she was purple and stiff with clear mucus on her mouth. The SF stated he brought the SC downstairs to the SM. The SF stated the baby monitor was on and turned all the way up and he never heard anything. The SM stated he came downstairs with the SC and said, "there's something wrong with her." The SM stated she yelled to call 911. The SM said the EMTs arrived and took the SC to the hospital.

NCDSS spoke with the Aunt who resided in the home. The Aunt stated she had left for work that morning and was not home at the time the child was found. The Aunt stated she had been living in the home for several weeks and had no concerns about the care of the SC or the SSs. NCDSS spoke with the MGF and the MGM, who stated they had no concerns about the care of the SC and the SSs. NCDSS observed the home and there were no noted safety concerns. The 6yo SS was interviewed and the 2yo was observed. NCDSS assessed the safety of the SSs and a temporary safety plan was implemented with the Aunt, MGF and MGM. All family members agreed to the safety plan. They agreed to be in the home with the SF to assist with the care of the SSs until the SM had recovered from her recent car accident. NCDSS offered all family members referrals for bereavement counseling and with possible assistance with burial costs.

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NCDSS contacted and interviewed all appropriate collaterals including but not limited to first responders, LE, medical professionals and family members. There were no noted concerns for the SSs care. NCDSS behavioral health clinician made numerous home visits with the family to assist all family members in coping with the death of the SC.

An autopsy was performed by ME on 11/12/2017. The autopsy results were received and the cause of death and manner of death were undetermined. No criminal charges were filed and no arrests were made.

The allegations of DOA/fatality and IG for the SC were pending and the case remained undetermined at the time of the writing of this report. The family was engaged in counseling services.

## Official Manner and Cause of Death

Official Manner: Undetermined Primary Cause of Death: Unknown

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
045229 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Yrs	045234 - Mother, Female, 33 Year(s)	Inadequate Guardianship	Pending
045229 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Yrs	045233 - Aunt/Uncle, Female, 38 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Pending
045229 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Yrs	045234 - Mother, Female, 33 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Pending
045229 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Yrs	045233 - Aunt/Uncle, Female, 38 Year(s)	Inadequate Guardianship	Pending
045229 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Yrs	045235 - Father, Male, 30 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Pending
045229 - Deceased Child, Female, 1 Yrs	045235 - Father, Male, 30 Year(s)	Inadequate Guardianship	Pending

## **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?

# **Child Fatality Report**

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Were appropriate/needed services offered in this case				
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?				
Was there an adequate assessment of the family's need for services?				
During the course of the investigation, was sufficient information gathered to assess risk to all surviving siblings/other children in the household?				
Was the risk assessment/RAP adequate in this case?				
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Fatality Risk Assessment / Risk Assessment	rronie			
Ectality Dialy Assessment / Dialy Assessment	Duofila			
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?	$\boxtimes$			
Are there any safety issues that need to be referred back to the local district?				
Was there an approved Initial Safety Assessment for all surviving siblings/ other children in the household within 24 hours?				
At 30 days?				
At 7 days?				
Within 24 hours?				
Was there an adequate safety assessment of impending or immediate dang in the household named in the report:	ger to sur	viving sib	olings/oth	er children
Were there any surviving siblings or other children in the household?	$\boxtimes$			
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Fatality Safety Assessment Activities				
Was there timely entry of progress notes and other required documentation?				
Coordination of investigation with law enforcement?				
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)?				
Was a death-scene investigation performed?				
All appropriate Collaterals contacted?				



## **Explain:**

The case remained open at the time of the writing of this report and the RAP had not yet been completed.

## Placement Activities in Response to the Fatality Investigation

	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?				
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: The SS remained in the care of their parents.				

## Legal Activity Related to the Fatality

Was there legal activity as a result of the fatality investigation? There was no legal activity.

## 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							
<b>Economic support</b>							
Funeral arrangements							
Housing assistance							
Mental health services							
Foster care							
Health care							
Legal services							
Family planning							
<b>Homemaking Services</b>							
Parenting Skills							
<b>Domestic Violence Services</b>							
Early Intervention							
Alcohol/Substance abuse							
Child Care						$\boxtimes$	

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Intensive case management				
Family or others as safety resources				
Other			$\boxtimes$	

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? Yes

## **Explain:**

NCDSS provided bereavement referrals for the SS as well as all family members.

Were services provided to parent(s) and other care givers to address any immediate needs related to the fatality? Yes

## **Explain:**

NCDSS provided referrals for bereavement services and assisted the family with applying for assistance with burial cost for the SC.

## **History Prior to the Fatality**

# Did the child have a history of alleged child abuse/maltreatment? No Was there an open CPS case with this child at the time of death? 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? No

## **CPS - Investigative History Three Years Prior to the Fatality**

Date of SCR Report	Alleged Victim(s)	Alleged Perpetrator(s)	Allegation(s)	Status/Outcome	Compliance Issue(s)
02/01/2016	Sibling, Female, 4 Years	Mother, Female, 32 Years	Inadequate Guardianship	Indicated	No
	Sibling, Female, 4 Years		Parents Drug / Alcohol Misuse	Indicated	

## Report Summary:

The SM was operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of anti depressant medication with 4yo SS in the back of the car. The SM was so impaired that she was driving erratically and entered into and crossed over on-coming traffic where cars were forced to avoid her vehicle. The SS suffered no injuries. The role of the SF and 1yo SS were unknown.

**Determination:** Indicated **Date of Determination:** 04/15/2016

## **Basis for Determination:**

The SM was arrested for driving under the influence of prescription medication. The SM admitted she had taken her medication that day and was also tired from lack of sleep, being pregnant and anemic. NCDSS confirmed that one of the side effects to prescription medication was drowsiness. The SM admitted to poor judgment. The SM's actions placed the

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4yo SS at imminent risk of harm. NCDSS Sub the allegations of PD/AM and IG against the SM. The SM was working
with her doctor and there were no noted safety concerns for the SS. The case was indicated and closed.
OCFS Review Results:
OCFS found that Niagara County Department of Social Services made the appropriate determination based on the
information gathered during the investigation.
Are there Required Actions related to the compliance issue(s)? Yes No
CPS - Investigative History More Than Three Years Prior to the Fatality
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There was no history more then three years prior to the fatality report.
Known CPS History Outside of NYS
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

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