

Report Identification Number: AL-20-027

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

Issue Date: Feb 17, 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: Saratoga Date of Death: 09/03/2020

Age: 3 month(s) Gender: Female Initial Date OCFS Notified: 09/03/2020

Presenting Information

An SCR report was received with concerns that on 9/2/20, the mother was co-sleeping with the three-month-old child in an adult bed. On 9/3/20, the mother awoke, used the bathroom and made coffee before returning to the bedroom. When the mother checked on the child, she was face down and unresponsive in the bed. The mother ran with the child to a nearby fire station, and was met on the street by emergency services. The child was taken to the hospital where she was pronounced dead.

Executive Summary

This fatality report concerns the death of a three-month-old female subject child that occurred on 9/3/20. A report was made to the SCR on that same date with allegations of Inadequate Guardianship and DOA/Fatality against the child's mother. Saratoga County Department of Social Services (SCDSS) received the report and investigated the child's death. An autopsy was completed; however, the official cause and manner had not yet been released at the time of this writing.

At the time of the child's death, she resided with her mother, eight-year-old sister, maternal uncle, and his three children, ages eight, seven and three years old. The child's biological father lived in another state and did not have an active role in her life. It was discovered that on 9/3/20 the mother, child and sibling had been asleep in the mother's bed; the child had been placed atop a Boppy pillow, which was her usual sleeping environment. The mother awoke at approximately 9:00AM and left the room for about five minutes; she had not looked at the children prior to exiting. When the mother returned to the room, she noticed the subject child was face down, partially off the Boppy pillow, and unresponsive. The mother picked up the child and yelled for help before she and the sibling ran outside and toward a neighbor's house. The neighbor heard the commotion and contacted emergency services. First responders arrived and began administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The child was transported to a local hospital where she was pronounced deceased at 10:01AM.

From the time the investigation began to the time of its closure, SCDSS interviewed family members and collateral sources. Law enforcement found no criminality regarding the fatality, and the medical examiner noted no findings of abuse or maltreatment upon physical examination of the child. SCDSS found evidence the mother placed the child at risk of harm by placing her in an unsafe sleeping environment, and therefore substantiated the allegation of Inadequate Guardianship. SCDSS did not find enough evidence to show the death of the child was in direct correlation of the sleeping environment, and unsubstantiated the allegation of DOA/Fatality. The family was referred to community-based services to address grief and bereavement, and the investigation was indicated and closed.

Findings Related to the CPS Investigation of the Fatality

Safety Assessment:

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

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Office of Children and Family Services Child Fatality Report	
and Family Services Child Patanty 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: SCDSS gathered information to determine the allegations and assess the safety of the Was the decision to close the case appropriate? Was casework activity commensurate with appropriate and relevant statutory or regulatory requirements? Was there sufficient documentation of supervisory consultation? Explain: The case record reflected supervisory consultations throughout the investigation. The commensurate with the case circumstances. Required Actions Related to the Fatality Are there Required Actions related to the compliance issue(s)? Fatality-Related Information and Investigative	Yes Yes, the case record has detail of the consultation. The level of casework activity was
Incident Information	
Date of Death: 09/03/2020 Time of Death: 10:01	AM
Time of fatal incident, if different than time of death:	Unknown
County where fatality incident occurred: Was 911 or local emergency number called? Time of Call: Did EMS respond to the scene? At time of incident leading to death, had child used alcohol or drugs?	Saratoga Yes Unknown Yes No

Playing Eating Unknown AL-20-027 Page 4 of 10 **FINAL**

Working

Child's activity at time of incident:

Driving / Vehicle occupant



Other

Did child have supervision at time of incident leading to death? Yes How long before incident was the child last seen by caretaker? 10 Minutes 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	No Role	Male	37 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Deceased Child	Alleged Victim	Female	3 Month(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Mother	Alleged Perpetrator	Female	29 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Other Child - Cousin	No Role	Male	8 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Other Child - Cousin	No Role	Male	7 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Other Child - Cousin	No Role	Male	3 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Female	8 Year(s)

LDSS Response

On 9/3/20, SCDSS received the fatality report concerning the death of SC. SCDSS initiated their investigation within 24 hours and coordinated their efforts with their multidisciplinary team. It was learned there were 4 other CHN in the household, 1 surviving sibling and 3 cousins, and SCDSS worked promptly to assess their safety.

On 9/3/20, SCDSS interviewed SM. SM explained the day prior to SC's death was an ordinary day, and the family began to wind down after dinner, around 7:30PM. SM stated MU watched the older CHN and read them a story while she gave SC a bath and played with SS. SM reported she almost always co-slept with SC and SS, since they were born; SM was educated surrounding the risks of an unsafe sleep environment in the past. SM explained she last fed SC around 11:30PM that night, then put SC to sleep on a Boppy pillow on SM's bed. SM stated she slept in the middle of SS and SC. SM explained she and the 2 CHN slept through the night and she could not remember what time she awoke the next morning, but knew it was after 7:00AM. SM stated her back was to SC and SS, and she did not look at them when she got out of bed. She explained she went to the bathroom, then into the kitchen where MU and his CHN were eating breakfast; SM poured herself some coffee and then returned to her bedroom. SM stated she was gone no more than 5 minutes, and when she looked at the CHN in her bed, SC was face down on the mattress and pale in color. SM said she grabbed SC out of the bed and ran out of the house toward a neighbor's home who was a first responder. On this same date, SS was interviewed and disclosed no safety concerns. SS reported she awoke before SM and SC and was in the kitchen with her cousins when SM ran out of the bedroom screaming. SS explained SM started CPR on SC, and SS and MU tried to call 911 but "could not get through." SS stated she then ran down the street to go to a first responder's home and a neighbor came out of her house to see what was wrong. SS reported she told the neighbor her sister was "dying," and they needed help. SS stated her mom and SC went to the hospital. She had no further information surrounding the incident.

On 9/3/20, SCDSS interviewed MU. MU explained he awoke around 5:00AM that morning to go to work, and everyone else in the house was still asleep. MU stated he spoke with SM on the phone around 9:00AM, and she informed him SC

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was not breathing. MU stated he went back to the house as soon as possible and arrived around 10:00AM; SM and SC had already left, and LE was still at the house. He had no other information regarding the incident, and denied any concerns surrounding SM's care of her CHN. MU's CHN were interviewed on this same date and all reported they were eating breakfast on the morning of 9/3/20 when SM ran out of her room with SC and said SC was not breathing; there were no safety concerns disclosed.

SCDSS spoke with BF via phone, as he resided in a different state. BF reported he was unsure if SC was his child and had never met her. He expressed concerns surrounding past drug use by SM but was unaware if she had still been using.

On 9/4/20, SCDSS observed the family's home and noted no safety hazards. SCDSS addressed the concern of possible substance abuse with SM, and she denied any current or recent drug use.

Throughout the investigation, SCDSS spoke with collateral sources, including medical staff, LE, the ME, first responders and family members. The record did not reflect any further concerns surrounding substance abuse issues noted by any of the collateral contacts. There were no criminal charges brought against SM for the death of SC. SCDSS provided the family with service referrals to address grief and bereavement. SCDSS found evidence SM's actions of placing SC in an unsafe sleeping environment placed SC at imminent risk of harm. The report was indicated and closed.

Official Manner and Cause of Death

Official Manner: Pending

Primary Cause of Death: Pending

Person Declaring Official Manner and Cause of Death: Medical Examiner

Multidisciplinary Investigation/Review

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

Comments: This fatality investigation was conducted by the Saratoga County Multidisciplinary Team.

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

Comments: Saratoga 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
056144 - Deceased Child, Female, 3 Mons	056145 - Mother, Female, 29 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Unsubstantiated
, , ,	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Inadequate Guardianship	Substantiated

CPS Fatality Casework/Investigative Activities

	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
All children observed?	\boxtimes			
When appropriate, children were interviewed?	\boxtimes			

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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?	\boxtimes			
Additional information: SCDSS interviewed the family and collateral sources. Progress notes and other entered within the required timeframes.	documen	tation wer	re complet	ed and
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	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?				
Fatality Risk Assessment / Risk Assessment	Profile			
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Was the risk assessment/RAP adequate in this case?	\square			

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Legal services

Family planning

Child Fatality Report

gathered to assess risk to all surviving si household?							
Was there an adequate assessment of th							
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					
Explain: SCDSS offered the family services in resp	onse to the	SC's death.					
Placement	Activities in	Response to	the Fatality	Investigation	on		
							TT 11 4
				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: No other children in the household were re	emoved as a	result of tl	nis fatality re	port.			
	Legal Activ	vity Related	to the Fatalit	v			
Was there legal activity as a result of the			? There was				
Services	Provided After Death	Offered, but Refused	Offered, Unknown if Used	Not Offered	Needed but Unavailabl	N/A	CDR Lead to Referral
Bereavement counseling		\boxtimes					
Economic support							
Funeral arrangements							
Housing assistance							
Mental health services							
Foster care							
Health care							

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 \boxtimes

Office of Children YORK STATE and Family Services	Child	Fatality	y Report	t			
	T	T	T	T		1	T
Homemaking Services							
Parenting Skills							
Domestic Violence Services							
Early Intervention							
Alcohol/Substance abuse			\boxtimes				
Child Care						\boxtimes	
Intensive case management						\boxtimes	
Family or others as safety resources							
Other							
Other, specify: Preventive Services						1	
Were services provided to siblings or oth their well-being in response to the fatalit Explain: SCDSS provided the parents with bereaver Were services provided to parent(s) and fatality? Yes Explain: SCDSS provided SM and MU referrals for declined.	ner children y? Yes ment counse other care	n in the hou	usehold to a	nddress an	y immediate	needs an	nd suppor
	History	Prior to t	he Fatality	y			
	C	hild Inform	ation				
Did the child have a history of alleged ch Was the child ever placed outside of the Were there any siblings ever placed outs Was the child acutely ill during the two	nild abuse/r home prion ide of the h	naltreatme r to the dea nome prior	ent? ath?	d's death?		No No No No	
	Infants	s Under One	Year Old				

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Had heavy alcohol use

Smoked tobacco

Used illicit drugs

During pregnancy, mother:

Experienced domestic violence

Had medical complications / infections

Misused over-the-counter or prescription drugs

Was not noted in the case record to have any of the issues listed



Infant was born: ☐ Drug exposed ☐ With fetal alcohol effects or syndrome ☐ With neither of the issues listed noted in case record
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
There was no CPS investigative history more than three years prior to the fatality.
Known CPS History Outside of NYS
In 2012, SM was listed as a subject in one report, which occurred in a different state. The report was received with concerns of general neglect and was unfounded. MU was listed as a subject in 3 investigations in that same state, all of which were unfounded. That state's CPS agency would not provide any further details to SCDSS.
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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