Office of Children and Family Services

Child Fatality Report

Report Identification Number: SV-18-053

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

Issue Date: Feb 11, 2019

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 **only** 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
Dr.-Doctor	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 Service	ACS-Administration for Children's Services	NYPD-New York City Police Department
PPRS-Purchased Preventive Rehabilitative Services	TANF-Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	FC-Foster Care
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		

Child Fatality Report

Case Information

Report Type: Child Deceased
Age: 2 year(s)
Jurisdiction: Sullivan
Gender: Female
Date of Death: 09/01/2018
Initial Date OCFS Notified: 09/10/2018

Presenting Information

On 9/7/18, the death of the 2yo female SC was reported to OCFS by the Sullivan County Department of Social Services (SCDSS) through the required Agency Reporting Form 7065. On 9/1/18, the SC died from a medical condition while hospitalized at Cohen-Blythedale Long Term Care Facility.

Executive Summary

On 9/6/18, SCDSS was notified by a nurse at Cohen-Blythedale Hospital that the 2yo SC passed away at their facility on 9/1/18 at 1:02 AM. SCDSS had an open CPS investigation at the time, which was received on 5/8/18, alleging drug use by the mother.

The SC was hospitalized since birth with serious medical issues that affected her heart and bowels and caused chronic respiratory failure. She was developmentally delayed and fed intravenously using Total Parenteral Nutrition. The SC was transferred to the pediatric long-term care facility at Cohen-Blythedale Hospital on 7/19/18. On 9/1/18 at 12:38 AM, the SC suddenly stopped breathing and CPR was administered and 911 was called. The SC was unable to be resuscitated and had already been pronounced deceased by the hospital physician when EMS and LE arrived. The ME was contacted and declined to perform an autopsy due to SC's diagnosed medical condition. The hospital physician determined the SC's cause of death was cardiopulmonary arrest. The parents were contacted and arrived at the hospital right after SC died.

SCDSS thoroughly investigated the circumstances surrounding SC's death and determined her death was the result of her medical condition and not caused by abuse or maltreatment. The 6yo and 3-month-old siblings were assessed to be safe in the parents' care and the home was found to be free from safety hazards. The CPS investigation was unfounded as it was determined the mother was only taking prescribed medication. The mother continued to engage in medication management with her doctor and the parents declined any additional services. Bereavement services were offered to the family and they declined.

Findings Related to the CPS Investigation of the Fatality

Safety Assessment:

- **Was sufficient information gathered to make the decision recorded on the:**
  - **Safety assessment due at the time of determination?** N/A

Determination:

- **Was sufficient information gathered to make determination(s) for all allegations as well as any others identified in the course of the investigation?** N/A
- **Was the determination made by the district to unfound or indicate appropriate?** N/A

Explain:
The death of the SC was not reported to the SCR, therefore there was no determination.

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 facts and circumstances surrounding the fatality were thoroughly investigated and there was evidence of supervisory consultation.

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: 09/01/2018 **Time of Death:** 01:02 AM

Time of fatal incident, if different than time of death: 12:38 AM

County where fatality incident occurred: Westchester
Was 911 or local emergency number called? Yes
Time of Call: Unknown
Did EMS respond to the scene? Yes
At time of incident leading to death, had child used alcohol or drugs? No
Child's activity at time of incident:

- ☐ Sleeping
- ☐ Working
- ☐ Driving / Vehicle occupant
- ☐ Playing
- ☐ Eating
- ☐ Unknown
- ☒ Other: Hospitalized

Did child have supervision at time of incident leading to death? Yes
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	Female	55 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Deceased Child	No Role	Female	2 Year(s)

Deceased Child's Household	Father	No Role	Male	31 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Grandparent	No Role	Female	76 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Mother	No Role	Female	29 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Female	6 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Female	3 Month(s)

LDSS Response

Within 24 hours of becoming aware that SC passed away, SCDSS notified the Spring Valley Regional Office and submitted the required 7065 Agency Reporting Form. SCDSS contacted hospital staff and learned SC passing away was a sudden event in which she stopped breathing due to her life-long medical issues and she was unable to be resuscitated. Hospital staff said the parents regularly visited SC and were in the process of learning the complicated procedure for feeding SC so that she could be discharged to the parents' care with visiting nurses in place.

The home was assessed and the surviving siblings were determined to be safe in their parents' care. The maternal grandmother and aunt, who resided with the family, had no concerns for the children. SCDSS had an open CPS investigation at the time of SC's death, that alleged the mother and sibling tested positive for opiates at the time of the sibling's birth. It was determined the positive toxicology was caused by medication the mother was prescribed. SCDSS thoroughly investigated the allegations of the open CPS investigation and no concerns arose for drug misuse by either parent.

SCDSS contacted numerous collaterals, including hospital staff, pediatrician, school staff, and the mother's doctor. Hospital records confirmed the SC passed away from a pre-existing medical condition and not due to abuse or maltreatment by the parents. SCDSS offered the parents bereavement services and they declined.

Official Manner and Cause of Death

Official Manner: Natural
Primary Cause of Death: From a medical cause
Person Declaring Official Manner and Cause of Death: Hospital physician

Multidisciplinary Investigation/Review

Was the fatality reviewed by an OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team?No
Comments: There is no OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team in Sullivan County.

CPS Fatality Casework/Investigative Activities

	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
All children observed?	☒	☐	☐	☐
When appropriate, children were interviewed?	☒	☐	☐	☐
Contact with source?	☐	☐	☒	☐
All appropriate Collaterals contacted?	☒	☐	☐	☐

Was a death-scene investigation performed?	☐	☐	☒	☐
Coordination of investigation with law enforcement?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☒	☐	☐	☐
Was there an adequate assessment of impending or immediate danger to surviving siblings/other children in the household named in the report:				
Within 24 hours?	☐	☐	☒	☐
At 7 days?	☒	☐	☐	☐
At 30 days?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐

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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Explain:
The death of SC was not reported to the SCR, therefore 24-hour and 30-day safety assessments were not required.

Fatality Risk Assessment / Risk Assessment Profile

	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Was the risk assessment/RAP adequate in this case?	☒	☐	☐	☐
During the course of the investigation, was sufficient information gathered to assess risk to all surviving siblings/other children in the household?	☒	☐	☐	☐
Was there an adequate assessment of the family's need for services?	☒	☐	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐	☐

Explain:
Risk was adequately assessed and bereavement services were offered and declined. No additional service needs were identified.

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?	☐	☒	☐	☐

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	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Funeral arrangements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Housing assistance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
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	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Intensive case management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Family or others as safety resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐

History Prior to the Fatality

Child Information

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?	Yes
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)	Allegation Outcome	Compliance Issue(s)
05/08/2018	Sibling, Female, 1 Days	Mother, Female, 28 Years	Parents Drug / Alcohol Misuse	Unsubstantiated	No

Report Summary:
An SCR report alleged the mother gave birth to the sibling on 5/7/18 and the mother's and baby's toxicology was positive for opioids. The baby was starting to go through withdrawals.

Report Determination: Unfounded

Date of Determination: 11/07/2018

Basis for Determination:
The mother's pain management doctor confirmed she was prescribed an opiate for pain and that she had not tested positive for any non-prescribed medication or drugs. Her doctor additionally reported the mother had no history of substance abuse and she was compliant with the doctor's recommendations. The sibling had minor withdrawals from the opiate with no lasting effect on the sibling. The parents appeared sober at all casework contacts and the children appeared to be well cared for.

OCFS Review Results:
SCDSS thoroughly investigated the allegations by speaking to all household members, observing the children and assessing the home for safety. The necessary collaterals were contacted and records reviewed. The SC passed away during the investigation and SCDSS conducted a review of the facts and circumstances surrounding her death.

Are there Required Actions related to the compliance issue(s)? ☐ Yes ☒ No

CPS - Investigative History More Than Three Years Prior to the Fatality

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

Known CPS History Outside of NYS

There was 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

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