



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

**REPORT ON THE Fatality OF:**

*Zeke Hamilton*

**BORN: 02/11/13**

**DIED: 11/15/13**

**ORAL REPORT DATE: 8/31/13**

**FAMILY NOT KNOWN TO:**

*Clarion County Office of Children and Youth Services*

**REPORT FINALIZED ON:**

**June 24, 2015**

This report is confidential under the provisions of the Child Protective Services Law and cannot be released.

(23 Pa. C.S. Section 6340)

Unauthorized release is prohibited under penalty of law.

(23 Pa. C.S. 6349 (b))



paramour. Upon arrival the victim child was unresponsive and seizing, with non-reactive pupils and multiple bruises which continued to appear at the Emergency Room (ER). Venango County Children, Youth and Family Services and [REDACTED] responded to the ER and interviewed the adults present. The victim child was transferred from UPMC Northwest to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh via Life Flight. CCOCYS received notification of the incident at 5:37 pm and responded to the camp site in Clarion County.

On December 3, 2013 CCOCYS, was notified that the victim child had died on November 15, 2013 and CCOCYS filed the required documentation as a fatality [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] report regarding the injuries was registered on August 31, 2013, but it was not certified as a near fatality at that time. The victim child passed away on November 15, 2013 as a result of injuries sustained [REDACTED]

The case was open only for investigation in Clarion County as the family was camping in Clarion County, but resides in [REDACTED] County, Ohio. [REDACTED] County, Ohio was notified of the report on August 31, 2013 and opened the case for services.

#### **Summary of DPW Child (Near) Fatality Review Activities:**

The Western Region Office of Children, Youth and Families obtained and reviewed the case record pertaining to this investigation. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the CCOCYS intake supervisor and agency director. The Western Region Office of Children, Youth and Families also participated in the County Internal Fatality Review Team meetings on January 13, 2014 and February 4, 2014 where copies of the autopsy were presented.

#### **Summary of Services to Family:**

##### **Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:**

The family had no prior Children and Youth involvement in Pennsylvania. The family was known to their home county in [REDACTED], Ohio through a previous [REDACTED] referral.

##### **Circumstances of Child Fatality and Related Case Activity:**

On August 31, 2013, Venango County Children, Youth and Family Services went to UPMC Northwest Emergency Room in [REDACTED] Pennsylvania, which is located in Venango County, [REDACTED] County Children and Youth Services in [REDACTED], Ohio was contacted after learning that the family resided in Ohio.

On August 31, 2013 at 5:18 pm, CCOCYS received a [REDACTED] report which they assigned as high risk with an immediate response. The victim child was camping with his family in Clarion County. The victim child was taken to UPMC Northwest in [REDACTED], Pennsylvania, unresponsive, having seizures, and covered in bruises. The victim child was life flighted to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP). [REDACTED] were with the grandfather, aunt and, maternal aunt's paramour at UPMC Northwest Hospital. Concerns were expressed for the other two children in this family.

On August 31, 2013 at 5:37 pm, a CCOCYS case worker arrived at the camp site. The case worker met with the victim child's maternal grandfather, who returned to the camp site after the victim child was life flighted to CHP, and victim child's two siblings. The maternal grandfather reported that the victim child's maternal aunt and her paramour had the victim child in their tent and came out telling others that the victim child was not acting right. The victim child's maternal grandfather and maternal aunt drove the child to UPMC Northwest in [REDACTED], PA. [REDACTED] were at the camp at the same time as the CCOCYS case worker. The victim child's siblings were transported back to their parent's home in Ohio by alternative caregivers.

Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families made a courtesy visit at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh on September 1, 2013 for CCOCYS.

On September 3, 2013, a collateral contact occurred between CCOCYS and [REDACTED] County Children and Youth Services confirming that Venango County Children, Youth and Family Services saw the victim child at the UPMC Northwest in [REDACTED], PA at the time of the report and CCOCYS responded to the camp site where the family was staying.

On September 3, 2013, CCOCYS contacted [REDACTED] had not determined an alleged perpetrator (AP), [REDACTED]

On September 9, 2013, CCOCYS received a call from [REDACTED] reporting that the victim child's [REDACTED] and the victim child would not have any normal functioning. [REDACTED]

On September 10, 2013, CCOCYS contacted [REDACTED] County, Ohio. Their agency [REDACTED] planned on having the other children, who were with the grandmother, have full body scans to see if they had any injuries. The victim child's father was in prison on drug related offenses, but was to be discharged from prison that day. The victim child's mother reported using heroin the weekend that the children were in Clarion County.

On September 11, 2013, a phone call from [REDACTED] indicated that the child would be removed from life support that day.

On September 12, 2013, the victim child was breathing on his own and the family requested to take him back to Ohio.

On September 13, 2013, [REDACTED] County CYS, and CCOCYS communicated regarding the family's request to move the child back to Ohio. It was determined that [REDACTED] if the family attempted to remove the victim child from the hospital.

On September 14, 2013, the victim child was transferred to [REDACTED]

The victim child's parents were staying with the victim child unsupervised given that the parents were not suspects in the injuries caused to the victim child.

On October 18, 2013, CCOCYS met with the victim child's mother and observed the victim child at [REDACTED]. The case worker advised the victim child's mother [REDACTED]

On October 23, 2013, the PA State Police reported that the DA's office was arresting the victim child's maternal aunt and paramour and charging them with aggravated assault.

[REDACTED]

The victim child died on November 15, 2013.

The Allegheny County autopsy report dated November 18, 2013 shows the manner of death as homicide and the victim child died as a result of severe traumatic brain injury due to blunt force trauma to the head.

**Current Case Status:**

The case was open only for investigation in Clarion County as the family resides in [REDACTED] County, Ohio.

[REDACTED] County, Ohio was notified of the report on August 31, 2013 and opened the case for services. The agency [REDACTED] made arrangements for the victim child's two older siblings to safely reside with the paternal grandmother, where they continue to live. The victim child's two older siblings both

received complete medical exams including full body scans and were found to have no injuries.

██████████ are being held in the ██████████ Jail. The maternal aunt's paramour has been charged with Criminal Homicide, Criminal Conspiracy, Simple Assault, Aggravated Assault, and Endangering the Welfare of Children. The maternal aunt has been charged with Criminal Conspiracy and Endangering the Welfare of Children.

**County Strengths and Deficiencies and Recommendations for Change as Identified by the County's Child (Near) Fatality Report:**

Act 33 of 2008 also requires that county children and youth agencies convene a review when a report of child abuse involving a child fatality or near fatality is indicated or when a status determination has not been made regarding the report within 30 days of the oral report to ChildLine. Clarion County convened a review team on January 13, 2014 and February 14, 2014 in accordance with Act 33 of 2008 related to this report.

- Strengths: Venango County and Clarion County responded immediately to the report. There was good coordination by Clarion County, Venango County, Allegheny County, ██████████ County, and the PA State Police.
- Deficiencies: Clarion County's review team did not meet within 30 days due to the Christmas holiday, but the agency did establish a meeting date and notify the team members within 30 days.
- Recommendations for Change at the Local Level: No recommendations for change at the local level.
- Recommendations for Change at the State Level: No recommendations for change at the state level.

**Department Review of County Internal Report:**

The Western Regional Office of Children, Youth and Families reviewed Clarion County Office of Children and Youth Services' internal report on February 4, 2014.

**Department of Public Welfare Findings:**

- County Strengths: Venango County and Clarion County responded immediately to the report. There was good coordination by Clarion County, Venango County, Allegheny County, ██████████ County, and the PA State Police.

- County Weaknesses: Clarion County's review team did not meet within 30 days due to the Christmas holiday, but the agency did establish a meeting date and notify the team members within 30 days.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance: Clarion County Children, Youth and Family Services will be receiving a citation for not having an Act 33 meeting within the first 30 days.

**Department of Public Welfare Recommendations:**

After reviewing the case record, interviewing the intake supervisor, agency director, and attending the Child Death Review meeting on January 13, 2014 and February 4, 2014 the Western Regional Office of Children, Youth and Families has concluded that the Clarion County Children, Youth and Family Services followed appropriate protocol in regards to the investigation of this referral.