



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## **REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY:**



**Date of Birth: 12/07/2013**  
**Date of Incident: 01/03/2016**  
**Date of Report to Child Line: 01/04/2016**  
**CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]**

### **FAMILY KNOWN TO COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGENCY AT TIME OF INCIDENT OR WITHIN THE PRECEDING 16 MONTHS:**

The Family was not known to any County Children and Youth Agency

### **REPORT FINALIZED ON:**

07/01/2016

Unredacted reports are confidential under the provisions of the Child Protective Services Law and cannot be released to the public.  
(23 Pa. C.S. Section 6340)

Unauthorized release is prohibited under penalty of law.  
(23 Pa. C.S. Section 6349 (b))

**Reason for Review:**

Pursuant to the Child Protective Services Law, the Department, through OCYF, must conduct a review and provide a written report of all cases of suspected child abuse that result in a fatality or near fatality. This written report must be completed as soon as possible but no later than six months after the date the report was registered with ChildLine for investigation.

The Child Protective Services Law also requires that county children and youth agencies convene a review when a report of child abuse involving a fatality or near fatality is substantiated or when a status determination has not been made regarding the report within 30 days of the report to ChildLine.

Montgomery County has convened a review team in accordance with the Child Protective Services Law related to this report. The county review team was convened on 02/04/2016.

**Family Constellation:**

<u>First and Last Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>
[REDACTED]	Victim Child	12/07/2013
[REDACTED]	Mother	[REDACTED] 1994
[REDACTED]	Father	[REDACTED] 1991

**Summary of OCYF Child Near Fatality Review Activities:**

The Southeast Regional Office of Children, Youth and Families obtained and reviewed all current investigation notes and gathered information from the Montgomery county Act 33 teaming. Follow up interviews were conducted with Montgomery County’s Administrator. SERO discussed the case with Montgomery County detective and reviewed hospital medical records.

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

The family had no prior involvement with Montgomery County Children and Youth.

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

Child was brought to the Lansdale Hospital with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The child was medivacked to Children’s Hospital (CHOP) and admitted

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Child has been certified to be in serious or critical condition. It was unknown if the child would survive. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The father recently returned from [REDACTED] and had three loaded guns on the bed and left the room. The mother didn't realize that father had left the guns on the bed. Mother turned away from the bed, and then she heard a "pop". When mother turned she saw the child laying on the floor bleeding. According to mother child shot himself in the head. The mother reports that father picked the child up and the family began driving to the hospital. Mother reports that Father has several guns that he carries and keeps them in a lock box at night.

The father was released from the Marines in 2013 after serving in Afghanistan for six years. He was wounded in Afghanistan and received three purple hearts. Since father's return to the states he has not been the same according to the mother. The father sits around with military gear on and leaves the guns around the house. According to the detective the father does not have any criminal history [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Mother further reports that Father has stated that he carries the guns due to his trauma in Afghanistan. The detective stated that the father has a permit to carry.

The detective does believe that the child shot himself, however, the detective did not believe the mother's account of the story that she was in the room at the time of the shooting. He thinks that mother was in another room with the father and they both ran into the bedroom when they heard the shot. The report also revealed that the home was in disarray and unkempt. According to mother she resides in [REDACTED] and visits the dad with the child on the weekends. Mother is five months pregnant. She is aware of the father's [REDACTED] and that he leaves guns around the home but did nothing to ensure the child's safety. The father was arrested and charged with recklessly endangering the welfare of a child. He has a preliminary hearing scheduled in July 2016.

The child [REDACTED] on 1/29/2016 and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The child was [REDACTED] on 3/22/2016. The case was transferred to Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) on 3/8/2016. The family is receiving in home services to monitor the child's medical issues. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] They have not determined if the child has sight in the right eye because he turns his head to the left to see. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The child is nonverbal and is in a wheelchair [REDACTED]

The investigation determined that both parents were responsible for causing serious physical neglect of a child.

**Summary of County Strengths, Deficiencies and Recommendations for Change as Identified by the County's Child Near Fatality Report:**

- Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;

The county agency collaborated well with the hospitals social worker and physicians and the collected all medical reports. The County met with the detective and made numerous hospital and home visits to follow the progress of the case.

- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;

No deficiencies were identified.

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse;

- More public education regarding gun safety and keeping firearms locked and out of reach of children
- Legal requirements should be established for the relinquishment of firearms if someone is [REDACTED] and laws preventing someone [REDACTED] to purchase firearms
- Improve the accessibility of services to veterans immediately upon their return home
- Fast track services at Veteran's Administration when the returning veteran suffered a traumatic experience or is returning from an active war zone
- Connect ACCESS mobile crisis services with Veteran's Administration to provide additional supportive services
- Develop Veteran's Multiservice centers in all counties to improve accessibility
- Develop protocols for pediatricians that involve asking about guns and gun safety during well child visits

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies;

None Identified

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.

- The Health department should provide Public Service Announcements regarding gun safety in homes with children.

### **Department Review of County Internal Report:**

SERO received the County's Act 33 report on 02/04/2016. Upon the review of the report, SERO agrees with the content of the report and has no issues with the services provided to the family as described in the report.

### **Department of Human Services Findings:**

- County Strengths:  
The County worked with the hospitals, detectives and the family to gather information and provide support to the family. The Act 33 meeting was held timely and the data tool was provided timely. The County made contact with Philadelphia County Children and Youth since the child was placed with the mother and services can be provided to the family.
- County Weaknesses:  
NONE
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency:  
NONE

### **Department of Human Services Recommendations:**

The Department agrees with all the county recommendations. In addition the Armed Forces should explore ways to notify the entities that complete the gun checks when a person is discharged for Mental Health Concerns.

Additionally, there should be exploration for a program by which Hospitals and Physician Offices should provide literature to parents educating them around gun safety.