



REPORT ON THE FATALITY OF:

Kelly Williams

Date of Birth: 10/25/2013
Date of Death: 04/23/2017
Date of Oral Report: 04/24/2017
CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

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

York County Office of Children, Youth and Families

REPORT FINALIZED ON:
9/22/17

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. 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.

York County Children, Youth and Families (YCCYF) convened a review team in accordance with the CPSL related to this report. The review team was convened on 05/19/2017.

Family Constellation:

<u>First and Last Name</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>
Kelly Williams	Victim Child	10/25/2013
* [REDACTED]	Biological Mother	[REDACTED] 1997
[REDACTED]	Biological Father	[REDACTED] 1995
[REDACTED]	Paternal Grandmother	[REDACTED] 1966
* [REDACTED]	Maternal Grandmother	[REDACTED] 1977
* [REDACTED]	Maternal Grandfather	[REDACTED] 1977

*Denotes an individual that is not a household member or did not live in the home at the time of the incident, but is relevant to the report.

Summary of OCYF Child Fatality Review Activities:

The Central Region Office of Children, Youth and Families obtained and reviewed all past and current records pertaining to the family. The Central Region reviewed various reports, assessments, medical records, the coroner’s summary, the autopsy report and case documentation provided by YCCYF. Central Region staff also had ongoing telephone and email communications regarding this case.

Summary of Circumstances Prior to Incident:

On 02/01/2017, YCCYF, received a [REDACTED] report. At this time the mother, father, paternal grandmother and victim child resided in the home. The referral source reported that the victim child’s mother was being “brainwashed” and emotionally abused by the victim child’s paternal grandmother. The referral source reported domestic violence was occurring in the home. It was also reported that the paternal grandmother was using drugs and there was not enough food in the house.

The referral source provided an extensive history regarding the victim child's parents' relationship, which dated back to 2012. This history included information regarding the victim child's mother, who ran away from her mother's (maternal grandmother) home located in North Carolina at the age of 16 to be with the victim child's father. It was alleged that the paternal grandmother had assisted the victim child's parents while they were on the run. During this time, the victim child's mother had been reported as a runaway. It was reported that the paternal grandmother would buy the victim child's parents alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. It was alleged that the paternal grandmother had foster children in her home that were removed due to allegations made against her regarding corruption of minors. While on the run, the victim child's mother ran away to Missouri and was brought back to North Carolina to reside with the maternal grandmother and court ordered to have no contact with victim child's father. Despite this information, the victim child's mother ran away again in December 2012 and was missing for 11 months. It was reported that the paternal grandmother was investigated because there was belief that she knew where the victim child's parents were located. The paternal grandmother never reported the victim child's father as a runaway. The parents had turned themselves in to the police in ██████████, Virginia. At this time, it was discovered that the victim child had been born. ██████████

██████████ had given the hospital false identification for the victim child's mother to use. She used this identification to deceive hospital staff as the victim child's mother was a minor and a runaway. The false name for the mother was listed on the child's birth certificate. The parents wrote a note giving temporary custody of the victim child to the paternal grandmother until they resolved their legal issues. The victim child's mother was placed in a juvenile facility ██████████ ██████████ due to her being reported as a runaway. The victim child's father was released from ██████████ Police Department custody. When the victim child's mother was released from the juvenile facility she was returned to her mother's care in North Carolina. It was reported that the victim child's mother wanted to return to the paternal grandmother's home to be with the victim child, however ██████████ ██████████ refused to let the victim child's mother or her family see the victim child. Eventually the mother did go to live with the paternal grandmother and victim child's father in Missouri. According to the referral source the victim child's mother was treated like a slave and ██████████ told the victim child's mother, if she ever tried to leave with the victim child she would kill her.

The referral source stated that the victim child and the victim child's mother needed to be removed from the home or ██████████ would kill them. The referral source had stated that the victim child's mother wanted to leave the home but ██████████ would not allow her to leave with the victim child. YCCYF had received subsequent emails from the referral source alleging that there were guns and mold in the home. It was also reported that the victim child had not been to the doctor and that the victim child and the victim child's mother were forced to use a bucket in the basement as their toilet. YCCYF had attempted to obtain information from the Sheriff's Department in North Carolina and from the Child Protective Services Agency in Virginia, where some of the history with the victim child's parents had occurred. YCCYF did receive reports from North Carolina

and Virginia which did corroborate the referral source's allegations of the victim child's parents' history together.

On 02/02/2017, when attempting to conduct a home visit, YCCYF was unsuccessful in locating the family. YCCYF had contacted the [REDACTED] Police Department and requested a welfare check of the home. The police officer spoke with the victim child's mother on 02/02/2017. The victim child's mother stated that she was absolutely fine and did not need the officer to help her leave the home. The police did not identify any safety concerns during their welfare check. This same day, the referral source again contacted YCCYF, stating that if YCCYF did not remove the victim child and the victim child's mother [REDACTED] would kill them. YCCYF had informed the referral source that an investigation would need to be completed before removing anyone from the home, however, the referral source asked that YCCYF just leave them alone because intervening while leaving them in the home would make the situation worse.

On 02/03/2017, YCCYF conducted a home visit and saw the victim child and the victim child's parents. The victim child appeared happy and healthy. The YCCYF caseworker met with the father alone and he had stated that he knew [REDACTED] was making the allegations. He reported [REDACTED] was upset that he and the victim child's mother were taking a break and the victim child's mother was planning on returning to North Carolina without the victim child. During the caseworker's discussion with the victim child's mother, it was reported that they do have a working bathroom and it is clean. The victim child's mother stated she was planning on returning to North Carolina to reside with the maternal grandmother and was not planning on taking the victim child with her. The caseworker asked why her name was not on the victim child's birth certificate, the victim child's mother stated that she was afraid to give her real name since she was on the run at the time. She also stated she was not concerned that the victim child's father or paternal grandmother would keep the victim child from her. The caseworker asked both of the victim child's parents about drug use in the home, who denied drug use but refused to complete a drug screen.

On 02/08/2017, the caseworker met with the paternal grandmother in the living room of the home. There did not appear to be any environmental concerns in the home. However, the caseworker did note that the home smelled of cat urine. The paternal grandmother had stated she drove the victim child's mother to North Carolina over the weekend and now she lost her job. The paternal grandmother also stated that the victim child's mother had not called to talk to the victim child and the victim child was asking where her mother was. The paternal grandmother reported she did not expect the victim child's mother to return. The victim child's father had plans to file for custody if the victim child's mother did not return within two weeks. The paternal grandmother stated the victim child's father was the primary caretaker but denied any knowledge of the false name on the birth certificate. The caseworker asked the paternal grandmother about the history of the victim child's parents. The paternal grandmother stated that the maternal grandmother had gotten on the stand and lied to the Judge. She stated that the victim child's mother had confided in her about her life at home but the paternal

grandmother would not tell the caseworker anything that the victim child's mother had said. The paternal grandmother denied drug or alcohol use but refused to complete a drug screen. She also denied that they use buckets as a bathroom, stating that the victim child has a pink child's toilet for toilet training. The paternal grandmother reported that the maternal grandmother suffers from depression and mental health issues. On 02/14/2017, YCCYF determined the victim child to be safe and the overall risk for the child to be low. The investigation was closed.

Circumstances of Child Fatality and Related Case Activity:

On 04/24/2017, YCCYF learned of a murder-suicide involving the victim child, the victim child's father, and the paternal grandmother. It was alleged that the victim child's father shot the victim child and the paternal grandmother in the head, then shot himself. There were notes left at the scene that indicated a murder-suicide pact was developed between the victim child's father and the paternal grandmother. It appeared that there was an initial attempt at death by carbon monoxide poisoning but it is believed that did not work and therefore the plan changed to shooting the victim child, the paternal grandmother and then the victim child's father shooting himself.

It was reported that the victim child's mother had initiated custody of the victim child on 03/08/2017, and there was an order in place that would require the victim child to reside with the victim child's father for two weeks and then with the victim child's mother for two weeks.

On 04/22/2017, the victim child's mother had contacted the [REDACTED] Police Department to do a welfare check after the victim child's father and the paternal grandmother did not appear for a custody exchange of the victim child in Virginia. On 04/22/2017, the police made several visits to the paternal grandmother's home, however no one answered the door and there appeared to be no activity in the home other than dogs barking. The police were not able to see in the home due to all the curtains being drawn. On 04/23/2017, the police again made several attempts to conduct a welfare check. At 11:20 PM when the police conducted another welfare check, the dogs that were inside the home had pushed the curtains open in the front window allowing the police to see someone lying on the sofa. The police entered the residence to find the paternal grandmother lying on the sofa with a single gunshot wound to the head and the victim child was in a bedroom lying on a bed with a single gunshot wound to the head. The victim child was in her pajamas with lots of pillows and stuffed animals around her. The victim child's father was found in another bedroom with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The police also found a black pick-up truck in the driveway which appeared to be a potential place where the deaths were going to occur. There was flexible plastic tubing that was placed over the exhaust of the vehicle, drywall tape behind the right side rear passenger door and a bike placed to hold the tube in place. A garden hose was found lying on the ground near the exhaust, having burn marks on the end near the exhaust. The police determined that the victim child's father and the paternal grandmother were unsuccessful in setting up the tubing and aborted the idea. Two sealed envelopes were also found on the coffee table in the

living room. One envelope was addressed to the paternal grandmother's other son, written by the paternal grandmother, stating how sorry she was that he has to deal with what was happening now. The letter also stated the paternal grandmother was leaving everything to her other son. The other envelope was addressed to the victim child's mother, [REDACTED] This letter stated the victim child's mother was warned that this was going to happen and it is all her fault for trying to take the victim child from them. It continued to say the victim child's mother was a whore and how much she was hated by them. It was clear that the paternal grandmother and the victim child's father were planning this murder-suicide. The time of death was estimated to be in the early morning hours of 04/23/2017.

The YCCYF investigation could not determine any prior violent criminal history for the paternal grandmother or the victim child's father. There were also no records found regarding the victim child being involved with child welfare agencies in the previous states in which the victim child's parents resided.

On 05/19/2017, the report was [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The case was closed on this date. [REDACTED] The victim child's mother was residing in North Carolina with her mother when this fatality occurred.

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

Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families, including cooperation between law enforcement and county agencies during investigations of suspected child abuse investigations;

- The Agency initiated an investigation immediately after becoming aware of the circumstances of the death. The agency, police department and coroner's office communicated throughout the investigation and shared information.

Deficiencies in compliance with statues, regulations and services to children and families, including cooperation between law enforcement and county agencies during investigations of suspected child abuse investigations;

- A closer investigation of the home was needed to assess the environmental allegations. Concerns about the child residing in the basement of the home and using buckets as a restroom were not clearly assessed or documented in the case file.

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

- The Agency was not notified of the child's death by any departments arriving on scene. The Agency learned of this report through the media. Further training of stakeholders, including police departments and the coroner's office, as to the need to report child deaths that are suspected to have been caused by abuse or the alleged perpetrator meets the definition based on the CPSL.

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

- The Act 33 team did not identify any recommendations for changes on monitoring and inspection of county agencies.

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

- There were allegations that father threatened to kill mother during a custody conciliation meeting. It is recommended that custody conciliators have knowledge and education on the topic of domestic violence. This could be a time in which information could be provided to the parties for domestic violence services, including Protection from Abuse orders. Custody Conciliators could also be trained on red flags for domestic violence and make referrals to children and youth agencies if there are concerns for the children. Also, the conciliators could contact police agencies when there is a threat of serious harm from one party to another.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

The Central Region Office received York County's Child Fatality Team Report on 08/07/2017. The Central Region finds York's internal report to be an accurate reflection of the Act 33 meeting. The report content and findings are representative of what was discussed during the meeting on 05/19/2017.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths:
YCCYF learned of this fatality through the media and responded to the incident in a timely manner. YCCYF obtained coroner and autopsy reports. The county worked collaboratively with the [REDACTED] Police Department. YCCYF submitted all regulatory required documentation to the Central Region Office and ChildLine in a timely manner.

- County Weaknesses:

On 02/01/2017, YCCYF received a [REDACTED] report and visits to the home were completed on 02/03/17 and 02/08/2017. YCCYF did not interview the victim

child during the home visits. The case file lacked notation that the caseworker ever attempted to interview the victim child or the reason why this interview did not occur. The caseworker only saw the living room area and the safety of the victim child's environment, sleeping arrangements, clothing, and nutritional needs were never assessed as the walk-through of the home was not completed.

The victim child's mother had left the home of the paternal grandmother and victim child's father on 02/04/2017. There were no additional attempts by YCCYF to contact the victim child's mother to determine if the allegations after she left that environment were valid.

During the course of YCCYF involvement, the victim child's mother, the victim child's father and the paternal grandmother all refused to take drug tests. The [REDACTED] report alleged that there was drug use in the home. YCCYF did not follow up on this allegation. The [REDACTED] investigation appeared to be superficial even though the allegations and the history provided by the referral source were very concerning.

- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance:

CPSL 23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63. 6368(c)(1): An investigation shall include a determination of the safety or risk of harm to the child or any other child if each child continues to remain in the existing home environment. YCCYF did not do a thorough assessment of the victim child's safety in the paternal grandmother/parent's home.

3490.232(g): The county agency shall interview the child, if age appropriate and the parent or the primary person who is responsible for the care of the child. The county agency shall also conduct interviews with those persons who are known to have or may reasonably be expected to have information that would be helpful to the county agency in determining whether or not the child is in need of general protective services. On 02/03/2017, the caseworker observed the child in the home and stated she appeared to be happy and healthy. There was no notation that the caseworker attempted to interview the victim child or the reason why that did not occur.

3490.232(i)(j): The county agency shall provide or arrange appropriate services to assure the safety of the child during the assessment period. The county agency shall initiate the appropriate court proceedings and assist the court during all stages of the court proceedings if the county agency determines that general protective service are in the best interest of a child and if an offer of an assessment, a home visit or services is refused by the parent. The victim child's mother, father and paternal grandmother all refused drug tests, however, this was one of the concerns reported. The agency had no follow up with any of the parties regarding this concern.

3490.321(j): The county agency shall assess the safety and risk of the child when the circumstances change within the child's environment at times other than required under this section. The victim child's mother had left the home of the paternal grandmother and victim child's father on 02/04/2017. The victim child remained in the home. There were no additional attempts to contact the victim child's mother to try to determine if there was any validity to the allegations after she left that environment.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

The Central Region Office recommends York County Children, Youth, and Families meet all regulatory guidelines regarding the Child Protective Service Law and child fatalities and near fatalities. The Central Region Office also recommends YCCYF continue to work collaboratively with law enforcement, medical personnel, service providers and the Central Region Office.