



REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:

[REDACTED]

Date of Birth: 01/29/2008
Date of Incident: 05/29/2017
Date of Report to ChildLine: 05/29/2017
CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

**FAMILY NOT KNOWN TO COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGENCY AT TIME
OF INCIDENT OR WITHIN THE PRECEDING 16 MONTHS:**

Lehigh County Office of Children & Youth Services

REPORT FINALIZED ON:
11/08/2017

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.

Lehigh 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 06/15/2017. A follow up meeting occurred on 07/06/2017.

Family Constellation:

First and Last Name:

[Redacted]

Relationship:

Victim Child
Biological Mother
Biological Father
Sibling
Sibling

Date of Birth

01/29/2008
[Redacted] 1985
[Redacted] 1982
[Redacted] 2009
[Redacted] 2012

Summary of OCYF Child Near Fatality Review Activities:

The Northeast Regional Office of Children Youth and Families (NERO) received and reviewed records of the Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation. NERO staff had a discussion with the investigating caseworker and her supervisor. NERO staff participated in the Act 33 meeting on 06/15/2017. The meeting included a review of the agency file, medical records and a discussion related to the incident including reports from law enforcement. NERO staff participated in the follow up meeting on 07/06/2017. The meeting included an update on the status of the victim child and a discussion with the fire marshal who is a certified fire and explosion investigator as to possible scenarios of what had occurred.

Summary of circumstances prior to Incident:

The Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services (LCOCYS) had no prior involvement with the family.

Circumstances of Child (Near) Fatality and Related Case Activity:

On 05/29/2017, the victim child and the victim child's sibling were brought into the emergency department of Lehigh Valley Hospital (LVH), Cedar Crest. The victim child, sibling and father were attempting to build a campfire in the kitchen using a soda can, bowl, cotton balls and rubbing alcohol. As a result of an explosion, the victim child sustained significant burns to the face, chest and arms, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The victim child's sibling also received second degree burns and was admitted [REDACTED]

The mother reports being upstairs on the date of incident with the younger sibling getting ready for the family outing to Knoebels Amusement Park. The mother heard an explosion followed by screaming. The mother ran down stairs and found the sibling with her shirt on fire. The mother pushed the sibling to the floor and extinguished the fire. The mother then entered the kitchen where she saw the victim child near the sink with the father who was attempting to rinse the victim child's burns. The mother grabbed a fire extinguisher and put out the fire that was burning in the kitchen. The mother then put the entire family in the car and drove to Lehigh Valley Hospital. No police, fire or EMS were called.

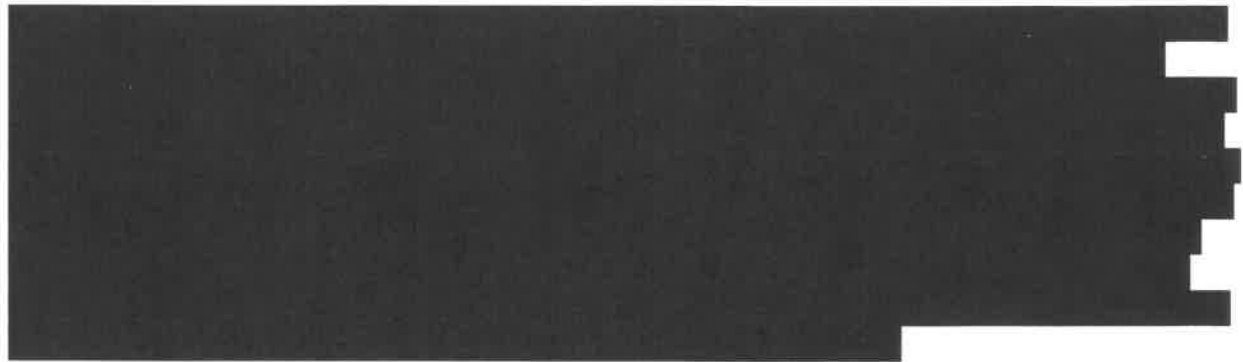
On 05/29/2017, the LCOCYS on-call caseworker attempted to visit the victim child and family at LVH. Due to concerns surrounding infection, the caseworker was not able to see the victim child. [REDACTED] The caseworker was able to see the sibling on this date. The caseworker met with the mother. The mother reported the father had made homemade campfires in the kitchen in the past with the most recent a few months ago. The mother was not aware the father was making one with the children that morning. [REDACTED]

The mother reported the incident to be a terrible accident and stated the father as protective of the children and "not a foolish man."

A Forensic interview of the victim child's sibling took place on 06/05/2017. The victim child's sibling reported that on the date of incident "daddy set up a little fire." The sibling reported daddy saw it on YouTube. The fire took place in the kitchen and the victim child and sibling were present. The younger sibling was upstairs with the mother. The sibling reported the father used a plastic bowl, cut a Monster drink can and set it inside the bowl. The sibling reported the father placed cotton balls into the can and poured rubbing alcohol into it. The sibling reported she and the victim child were sitting on one side of the kitchen island and the father was on the other side. The sibling reported the victim child put a pencil into the fire and stated the fire needs more alcohol. The sibling stated their father was watching and said ok. The sibling reported the victim child pulled the pencil out of the fire and put it into the alcohol container and that is when the explosion occurred. The sibling stated the pencil had a small fire but that is why the victim child said it needed

more alcohol. The sibling reports the father was present the entire time and never left the kitchen.

On 06/16/2017, the CPS caseworker spoke with the father. The father reported that he was present the entire time they were building the camp fire. The father reported he poured more alcohol into the can and it exploded. The father reported he was able to get the victim child under the water as the victim child was covered in flames. The father was very upset about what had happened and stated it was an accident. The father reported the last time they built a campfire of this nature, they did not have any problems.



The CPS investigation outcome was submitted on 06/16/2017, as Unfounded.

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

Information in this section is copied directly from the county report.

- Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
- The victim child received a timely and appropriate medical response to his condition.
- Kin, specifically the children's maternal aunt, provided care to the victim child's siblings during his hospitalization.
- Mother demonstrated enhanced protective capacities.
- Agency coordinated its investigation with law enforcement.

- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
- No recommendations made.

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse;
- No recommendations made.

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies; and
- No recommendations made.
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.
- The agency should develop internal protocols around the following for future cases involving burns suspected as result from child abuse or neglect:
 - a. Contacting local fire inspector to consult on the agency's investigation.
 - b. Caseworker response to the hospital for burn cases should be immediate so as to be able to photograph child's injuries prior to dressing, in order to share photos with fire marshal.
 - c. Caseworker to recommend to family to not clean up burn site within the home prior to investigator and/or fire marshal visit.
- Agency should consider participating in the making of an informational video regarding fire safety to avoid incidents like this one in the future.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services submitted the County Review Team Report to NERO on 09/14/2017. NERO determined that the county internal report accurately reflected background case history and the status of the CPS investigation.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths:
- LCOCYS conducted a timely CPS investigation. LCOCYS followed all established protocols for referral to law enforcement.
- County Weaknesses: and
- LCOCYS did not conduct a thorough investigation of this case as the victim child was not interviewed. The NERO does acknowledge due to the injuries the victim child sustained he could not be interviewed initially, however the county had an additional 42 days to complete the investigation. It would be reasonable to expect the victim child would be interviewed before case closure. There were conflicting statements between the siblings' report of what had occurred and what the father reported.

- LCOCYS did not follow the recommendations of the Act 33 Review Team in that they concluded the investigation without contacting the arson inspector to gather additional information as to what went wrong, and what may have caused the explosion.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency.
- LCOCYS failed to conduct an interview with the victim child. LCOCYS did not consult with the arson inspector who may have had information relating to the incident of suspected child abuse. The county will receive a citation as per Chapter 3490.55 (d) when conducting an investigation, the county agency shall interview the child, parent(s); alleged perpetrator; others with information.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

The Department recommends that education be provided to the public as to the dangers of this type of activity. Education shall also be provided on fire safety.