



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

[REDACTED]

**Date of Birth:** 10/24/2016  
**Date of Incident:** 01/17/2017  
**Date of Report to ChildLine:** 01/17/2017  
**CWIS Referral ID:** [REDACTED]

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

**Bucks County Children and Youth Services**

**REPORT FINALIZED ON:**  
01/12/2018

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.

The 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 02/10/2017.

**Family Constellation:**

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth:</u>
[REDACTED]	Mother	[REDACTED] 1980
[REDACTED]	Father	[REDACTED] 1984
[REDACTED]*	Child	10/24/2016
[REDACTED]*	Paternal Grandmother	Unknown
[REDACTED]*	Paternal grandfather	Unknown
[REDACTED]*	Maternal Aunt	[REDACTED] 1990
[REDACTED]*	Maternal Uncle	[REDACTED] 1988

\*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 Near Fatality Review Team Activities:**

The Southeast Regional Office of Children, Youth and Families obtained and reviewed all case documentation, and documents pertaining to the Family. Contact was made with the county caseworker to obtain the structured case notes, safety and risk assessments and the child’s medical reports. The Act 33 meeting was on 02/10/2017, SERO was represented.

Bucks County Children & Youth Child Protective Services social worker presented to the team a verbal and written summary of the allegations regarding the BCCY’s investigation into the injuries experienced by 4-month-old victim child. The supervisor provided information regarding the current placement situation and visitation planning for victim child.

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

The family did not have prior involvement with the Bucks County Children and Youth.

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

On Tuesday 01/17/2017, Bucks County Children & Youth (BCCY) received a Child Protective Services (CPS) referral regarding the Victim (DOB: 10/24/2016). The referral stated that the victim was seen at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) [REDACTED]. The parents denied any head trauma or abuse and had no explanation for [REDACTED].

As soon as the report was received by the BCCY, the social worker contacted CHOP for an update on the victim. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The social worker then notified law enforcement to plan to immediately go to CHOP. When the Social worker and Detective arrived at the hospital, [REDACTED] and there were only approximately 15-20 minutes to talk to parents.

At the time of the initial investigation, the parents expressed that they did not have any idea what happened to the victim to cause [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The parents also informed the Social worker at that time that the only people who had been alone with the victim were themselves, paternal grandmother, and a family friend, who watched for the victim for approximately two hours the Monday prior to the hospitalization.

[REDACTED] the social worker and detective were unable to gather much more information from the parents. Later that evening, the BCCY social worker called CHOP to obtain information [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The social worker was advised that the victim [REDACTED]

Due to the significance of the injuries and the lack of explanation, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] BCCY cleared the maternal aunt and approved her to be at the hospital with the victim. During the conversation with the parents, the BCCY social worker advised them that there would be a meeting at the police station the following morning to discuss the allegations and visitation plan.

On the morning of Wednesday, 01/18/2017, the BCCY social worker received a telephone call from paternal grandfather, who stated that the biological father and his daughter-in-law have obtained lawyers and will not be attending the meeting. BCCY later received a voice mail from [REDACTED] Law Offices stating that they represented the parents will not be attending the meeting.

Initially, BCCY had minimal contact with the parents subsequent to their obtained legal representation. BCCY was not aware of any current [REDACTED] concerns. Contact with the Bucks County [REDACTED] showed no involvement with the parents. The parents each have a Driving Under the Influence charge from 2011 but no other criminal history.

The victim [REDACTED] on 01/25/2017, and placed in the care of the maternal Aunt and Uncle in [REDACTED]

Doctors have made it clear that the injuries to the victim were from inflicted trauma, that the injuries are not consistent with [REDACTED] and they are not consistent with accidental trauma. The victim was referred for [REDACTED] services and was scheduled for several medical follow up appointments. [REDACTED]

BCCY Permanency Division took responsibility for handling the case and numerous family members were cleared to care for the victim, and to supervise the parents while visiting with the victim. [REDACTED] the victim was to return to her mother, and the father moved out of the home. During the week of 04/10/2017, the father admitted to shaking the victim and causing her injuries. The Bucks County District Attorney's office will be handling criminal charges against the father. At this time he will have visits supervised by a third party, and both parents will be evaluated [REDACTED] BCCY will maintain a General Protective Services case to monitor the victim's care effective as of 04/10/2017.

**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;
- 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 cooperation amongst the BCCY, law enforcement and medical professionals were a definite strength in this investigation.

- Deficiencies 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:

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] While liberal visitation is best practice when a child is placed in foster care, in cases where physical and/or sexual abuse is suspected visitation should be supervised by an independent/non-related party and/or limited with potential perpetrators until an investigation is complete.

- Address the balance between the legal rights of parents and the issue of child protection during a child abuse investigation so that a finding is not impeded. In this situation, the parents refused through their legal counsel to talk to the BCCY and law enforcement.

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

- Continue community education on child abuse.

- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families; None

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse; NONE

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies; None

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

- Improved collaboration and as it relates to child abuse, the courts and legal professionals should be informed of county and state regulations

during the CPSL investigation process so that decisions are made in the best interest of the child.

**Department Review of County Internal Report:**

SERO received the county's internal report on 04/17/2017 and concurs with the findings.

**Department of Human Services Findings:**

- County Strengths: The County completed all reports in timely manner and submitted to the regional office without delay.
- County Weaknesses: None
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency; None

**Department of Human Services Recommendations:**

The Department recommends increased collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.