



REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:

[REDACTED]

Date of Birth: 01/01/2010
Date of Incident: 08/13/2017
Date of Report to ChildLine: 08/14/2017
CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

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

Armstrong County Children Youth and Family Services

REPORT FINALIZED ON:
01/10/2018

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.

Armstrong County did not convene a review team as the report to ChildLine was unfounded prior to day 30.

Family Constellation:

First and Last Name:

Relationship:

Date of Birth:

[REDACTED]

Victim Child
Biological Mother
Biological Father
Sibling

01/01/2010
[REDACTED] 1984
[REDACTED] 1959
[REDACTED] 2012

Summary of OCYF Child (Near) Fatality Review Activities:

The Western Region Office of Children Youth and Families (WRO) obtained and reviewed the current records provided pertaining to the family. WRO staff reviewed various reports, assessments and case documentation provided by Armstrong County.

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

In 2010, Armstrong County Children Youth and Family Services (ACCYFS) received a report when the victim child and his mother tested positive for Marijuana at the time of the child's birth. An assessment was completed and the case was closed at Intake.

On 11/01/2016, ACCYFS received a General Protective Services report alleging the victim child had a large scratch on his face and said the injury was a result of the child throwing a paint can into a fire causing it to explode, but there was a rumor that the father threw the paint can into the fire. This report was screened out without assessment as the agency determined the report did not indicate that the child received any injury as a result of parental negligence and the child stated he threw the paint can into the fire.

Circumstances of Child Near Fatality and Related Case Activity:

On 08/14/2017, Armstrong County Children Youth and Family Services (ACCYFS) received a Child Protective Services referral alleging the victim child, age 7, was in serious condition due to suffering burns on his left leg.

It was reported the victim child was playing with an antique blow torch the family purchased from a flea market and the torch was believed to have had residual fluid that ignited, resulting in the victim child burning his shorts and causing burns to his left leg. The victim child was said to be playing with the torch in the garage while his mother was in the home.

The victim child was initially taken to Armstrong Center for Medicine and Health and then taken to Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh. Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families completed the requested courtesy visit with the victim child while he was at Mercy Hospital. The victim child presented at the hospital with an eight percent thickness burn to his left leg. The victim child was reported as [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] as responsive and talkative. [REDACTED] The victim child was determined to be in serious condition [REDACTED] A report of suspected child abuse was registered with ChildLine on 08/14/2017, registering the child's mother as the alleged perpetrator for causing bodily injury to the child through a recent act or failure to act. The victim child remained in the hospital until 09/07/2017 when [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The victim child remained [REDACTED] on 09/21/2017. A home visit was formally completed with the family on 09/26/2017.

The victim child was not interviewed by the county regarding the allegations. The victim child explained [REDACTED] he was playing with the torch and his pants caught on fire. The victim child explained he first attempted to stop, drop and roll and when that did not work he ran into the home to his mother who then put the fire out with water.

ACCYFS met with the mother and father on 09/05/2017. Although the parents were interviewed regarding the existence of the report, the county did not document any specific interview regarding the actual allegations or sequence of events on the date of incident. Additionally, there was no documentation that the sibling was interviewed regarding the incident. The mother did express appreciation for the incident being recognized as an accident.

[REDACTED] Police were investigating the incident that occurred, however at this time no charges have been filed against the mother. Armstrong County had no further information regarding the outcome of the criminal investigation. ACCYFS completed the investigation outcome regarding the physical abuse with an unfounded determination on 09/08/2017, noting that reports determined the child's injuries were a result of an accident. The case remained open at the intake level pending a visit to the family home and the victim child's [REDACTED]

██████████ Upon completion of the home visit on 09/26/2017, the case was closed on 09/29/2017.

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

Armstrong County Children Youth and Family services did not convene a review team and did not submit a county review team report as the investigation concluded prior to 30 days.

- Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse;
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies; and
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

Armstrong County Children Youth and Family services did not convene a review team and did not submit a county review team report as the investigation concluded prior to 30 days.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths:
 - The Agency requested a courtesy visit from Allegheny County Children Youth and Family Services with the victim child.
 - The Agency had open and ongoing communication with the hospital regarding the victim child's ██████████
- County Weaknesses:
 - Except for a message left for the investigating detective, ACCYFS did not follow up with Law Enforcement regarding the active criminal

investigation of the incident. There was no collaboration between ACCYFS and Law Enforcement.

- ACCYFS did not make attempts to see the victim child's 5-year-old sibling until the scheduled home visit on 09/26/2017. The safety of the sibling was not ensured until 43 days after receipt of the report.
 - The Agency did not interview the victim child regarding the allegations.
 - The Agency did not document the interview with the alleged perpetrator which addressed the allegations or specific events as they related to the date of incident.
 - The investigation outcome was submitted as unfounded without the agency interviewing the victim child or sibling and minus a home visit to assess the safety of the home.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency.
 - Child Protective Services Law Section 6368 (c)(1)-The victim child's 5-year-old sibling's safety was not assured or assessed until 43 days after receipt of the report, and after the submission of the investigation outcome.
 - 3490.55 (i) - The home was not assessed until 43 days after the report was received and after the submission of the investigation outcome.
 - 3490.55 (d) - The Agency did not document an interview of the victim child, the sibling, the mother (alleged perpetrator) or the father regarding the specific allegations/circumstances related to the suspected abuse.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

The Department is recommending when counties receive a Child Protective Services report where the incident appears to be accidental the county Agency should proceed with the investigation using standard investigation procedures. Despite the delicate nature of the victim child's condition counties should make attempts to complete interviews with potential witness/collaterals, caretakers, victims and alleged perpetrators in non-traditional settings if necessary such as schools, hospitals, and offices to ensure the safety of children and remain in compliance with regulatory requirements.

The Department is also recommending when a report is registered as a Child Protective Services investigation for an "act/failure to act" the county should look at both the actual act and the failure to act. In this case the allegations do state the incident was an accident, but it seems the county spent a lot of time trying to investigate whether the incident was an accident maybe overlooking the supervision concerns therefore completing the investigation without having facts/knowledge of what events actually occurred from the parties involved in the incident.

Lastly, the Department is recommending fire departments and schools/education entities continue to educate children regarding fire safety. In this case the victim child did use the stop, drop and roll technique in an attempt to put out the fire on his clothing.