



REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:

[REDACTED]

Date of Birth: 9/10/2015
Date of Incident: 9/15/2017
Date of Report to ChildLine: 09/15/2017
CWIS ID: [REDACTED]

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

Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth

REPORT FINALIZED ON:

February 25, 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 (CPSL), 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 Office of Children and Youth (MCOCY) has convened a review team in accordance with the Child Protective Services Law related to this report. The review team was convened on October 16, 2017, and the review team determined that there was abuse and therefore, the report was "Indicated" within 33 days of receipt of the investigation.

Family Constellation:

<u>First and Last Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>
[REDACTED]	victim child	09/10/2015
[REDACTED]	biological mother	[REDACTED]/1997
[REDACTED]	maternal grandmother	[REDACTED]/1976
[REDACTED]	maternal uncle	[REDACTED]/1992
[REDACTED]	maternal uncle	[REDACTED]/1999
[REDACTED]	biological father	[REDACTED]/1994
[REDACTED]	mother's paramour	[REDACTED]/1994
[REDACTED]	paramour's child	[REDACTED]/2015

* did not live in the home at the time of the incident.

Summary of OCYF Child (Near) Fatality Review Activities:

The Southeastern Region Office of Children, Youth and Families (SERO) obtained and reviewed all current case records pertaining to the Pittman family, including the initial referral, all medical records, safety assessment, supporting documentation, and Norristown investigative police records.

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

On July 24, 2017, the agency received a Child Protective Services (CPS) and General Protective Services (GPS) regarding the victim child. The report alleged the victim child had access to his uncle's gun and that there were concerns about substance abuse by the mother. At the time of the report, the mother and victim child resided with the maternal grandmother and two uncles. The allegations were classified as creating a reasonable likelihood of injury through any recent act/failure

to act, parent substance abuse, and conduct by a parent that places the child at risk for abuse.

MCOCY performed an unannounced home visit on July 25, 2017, and a successful face to face contact with the mother, maternal uncle and the victim child was made. The assigned investigator consulted with local police about the report and any contacts for the household. A home assessment was attempted but declined by the mother due to the home being exterminated for roaches. The investigating caseworker successfully performed a second home visit on August 10, 2017 and ensured the safety of the child, as well as his sleeping arrangements. A urine toxicology screen was conducted on the mother and she [REDACTED] marijuana. The mother denied any use for the last three weeks and agreed to a safety plan to refrain from future use. The victim child's biological father is not in the home and resides in another town with his paramour. The investigative caseworker attempted to speak with the father, but the attempt was unsuccessful. The mother and father were engaged in an ongoing custody dispute and there was an open Protection from Abuse (PFA) order between the parents.

The case was reviewed with a supervisor and the case was determined "unfounded" and was closed on August 23, 2017

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

MCOCY received a Child Protective Services (CPS) report on September 15, 2017, alleging that the nearly 2-year old victim child was brought to [REDACTED] Hospital unresponsive except to pain stimulus. Upon further examination of the victim child, he presented with a left clavicle fracture and multiple bruises to his back and shoulders. The child was transferred from [REDACTED] Hospital to the [REDACTED], due to the child's unresponsiveness. The Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) team performed a thorough examination of the victim child and discovered he had additional injuries, specifically internal bleeding and lacerations to the spleen, liver and kidney, as well as rib fractures. The SCAN team determined that the victim child suffered multiple blunt force traumas to his abdomen. The report was certified by the [REDACTED] medical team as a near fatality and the victim child was listed in critical condition and was medically sedated from 09/15/2017 through 09/22/2017. The victim child required intravenous therapy (IV), breathing tubes and blood transfusions.

The victim child's biological mother was not able to provide a valid reason for her child's condition or injuries. The mother reported that she and the victim child were temporarily displaced from the maternal grandmother's home in Norristown because the home was being treated for roaches and bed bugs. The mother stated that she was staying with her friend (further referred to as the mother's paramour), in which she describes the two had an "on again" and "off again" relationship. The mother denied that the victim child was out of her supervision and on the morning of September 15, 2017, the victim child ate breakfast, began to vomit, and became lethargic and unresponsive. The mother stated she called a cab and transported the victim child to the local hospital.

The Norristown Police Department immediately began their investigation and interviewed the mother's paramour. The mother's paramour is known to the Norristown Police Department but does not have any criminal interaction with the Norristown police. The paramour is known to the police as a drug user in which his drug of choice is cough syrup with codeine. The paramour admitted that in the past, he has "boxed" the victim child, and encouraged his son and the victim child to box one another to "toughen" them up. The paramour revealed that on the morning of September 15, 2017, he took the victim child out to the local coffee and donut shop while the mother was asleep. The paramour disclosed that he tried to assist the victim child because he tripped on the curb and he landed on his side and shoulder. The paramour admitted that he believed the child was acting unusual. Norristown police secured video surveillance of the child and the paramour as they waked to the local coffee and donut shop that morning. The video revealed the paramour hit the victim child with force in his abdomen. The paramour was arrested on September 21, 2017, and was charged with felony aggravated assault, endangering the welfare of a child, reckless endangerment, and simple assault. The paramour is currently incarcerated. The formal hearing is scheduled for November 22, 2017. Further investigation revealed that the mother was aware of her paramour having the children fight and continued to leave the victim child unsupervised in his care. On October 17, 2017, the paramour was indicated as a perpetrator by commission and the mother was indicated as a perpetrator by omission. Currently, there are no criminal charges against Mother.

MCOCY obtained emergency custody of the child on September 18, 2017. Visitation and contact between the victim child and his mother is postponed due to the severity of the victim child's injuries, and because of the active investigation. MCOCY also ensured the safety of the perpetrator's biological son. The court eventually permitted the victim child and his mother supervised visitation within the hospital. MCOCY noticed positive changes in the victim child's disposition while visiting with his mother.

The victim child has made substantial recovery from his injuries but will require ongoing medical treatment and oversight. The victim child remained at [REDACTED] for several weeks and underwent acute rehabilitation and therapy. The victim child was transferred to a [REDACTED]. Due to the damage to his kidneys, the victim child will require continued use of blood pressure medication and continued use of a neck collar. The victim child will also require continued use of a feeding tube because he is unwilling to eat independently. [REDACTED] team will follow the victim child and monitor him for any necessary [REDACTED]. The victim child has an upcoming evaluation on February 26, 2018.

The victim child's biological father is pending criminal charges for simple assault and harassment, related to an incident with the biological mother. Previously, there was an active PFA between the mother and father. The biological father does not

have any housing or employment and is not considered a viable resource for the victim child.

The victim child's current goal is reunification and the concurrent goal is placement with a relative. MCOCY explored kinship options for the victim child, however, these resources are determined unfit and/or unwilling due to previous criminal or child abuse histories. MCOCY will continue efforts to find viable family members. MCOCY is providing [REDACTED] for the victim child, he has weekly supervised visits with his parents, and the court ordered his parents to complete psychological evaluations. The dispositional hearing was held on October 17, 2017 and the subsequent permanency review will occur on January 15, 2018.

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

- MCOCY did a good job collaborating with [REDACTED] medical team and law enforcement to gather further information regarding the victim child's injuries, identifying the perpetrators, and ensuring the child's safety.
- MCOCY were specifically cognitive in allowing the victim child visitation with his parents, and ensuring the visits occurred in a safe and [REDACTED] manner.
- MCOCY coordinated an Act 33 review team meeting on October 16, 2017 and determined the report as "Indicated" within 33 days of receipt of the investigation.
- On September 18, 2017, MCOCY obtained an order of protective custody (OPC) and placed the victim child in an appropriate [REDACTED] through the Children's Home of Reading.
- At the time of the report, the family did not have an open case or services with MCOCY. MCOCY did receive two prior reports and conducted prompt investigations into the matters. Each investigation resulted in "unfounded" reports. Subsequently, September 15, 2017, MCOCY assumed case management responsibilities for the entire family.
- The victim child's parents were referred to complete psychological evaluations.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

The agency received the CPS on September 15, 2017, and completed an internal report, as well as a scheduled review team meeting. Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS) concurs with the county agency's report.

Department of Human Services Findings:

County Strengths:

- MCOCY immediately contacted [REDACTED] Hospital and the [REDACTED], to gather additional information on the child's condition.

- MCOCY immediately contacted law enforcement to investigate the child abuse allegations and maintained consistent collaboration with law enforcement.
- MCOCY maintained consistent phone collateral calls and face-to-face visits with [REDACTED] medical personnel.
- MCOCY obtained and reviewed the child's medical records.
- MCOCY secured an [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] upon the child's release from the hospital.
- MCOCY assessed the perpetrator's child for safety in a prompt manner.
- MCOCY performed a search for additional relatives as a kinship referral source for the victim child.
- MCOCY arranged supervised visits between the victim child and his parents, to ensure that the family has an opportunity to maintain contact with the child in a safe and structured environment.
- MCOCY decided within 33 days of the date of the report and appeared to take all information obtained during the investigation into consideration when making the decision to "Indicate" the report.
- MCOCY is working with partners such as [REDACTED] in Pottstown, PA, to provide [REDACTED] to the family.

County Weaknesses:

- PA DHS has not identified any gaps in services for this near fatality.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

PA DHS concurs with MCOCY's recommendations -

- Recommend state and local level agencies to promote and fund parenting educational programs related to alternative discipline methods, specifically for fathers within the 16-25 age group.
- Recommend evidence-based home visiting programs, such as, the Nurse Family Partnership evolve from a maternal focus and be more inclusive of fathers and their critical role in child development.
- Recommend educational information related to eligibility and the referral process to these services, be relayed to maternal healthcare providers and the medical community.
- Recommend for the family court and custody mediators to increase awareness of community resources and educational programs and build them into their practice for custody matters involving young adults.
- Recommend that the local child welfare agencies review current practice/policy related to cases being assigned/not assigned to prior investigative workers upon re-referral.

- Recommend that at the time of the screening, intake, and case closure process in Montgomery County, all families be made aware of Community Connections as a resource.