



REPORT ON THE NEAR FATALITY OF:

[REDACTED]

Date of Birth: 07/25/2016

Date of Incident: 01/15/2019

Date of Report to ChildLine: 01/17/2019

CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

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

Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency

REPORT FINALIZED ON:

8/8/2019

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.

Lancaster 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 02/06/2019.

Family Constellation:

First and Last Name:

[REDACTED]

Relationship:

Victim Child
Sibling
Half-Sibling
Half-Sibling
Mother
Father
Caretaker/Cousin
Caretaker/Cousin
Caretaker

Date of Birth:

07/25/2016
[REDACTED]/2017
[REDACTED]/2014
[REDACTED]/2019
[REDACTED]/1994
[REDACTED]/1993
[REDACTED]/1999
[REDACTED]/1992
[REDACTED]/1990

*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 Activities:

The Central Region Office of Children, Youth and Families (CERO) obtained and reviewed all current case records pertaining to the [REDACTED] family. CERO staff reviewed various reports, assessments, and case documentation provided by Lancaster County. CERO staff discussed the case with the county on 01/17/2019, 02/06/2019, and 05/21/2019.

Summary of Circumstances Prior to Incident:

Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency received a report on the family on 05/12/2012 with concerns that the mother was drinking and smoking, and the police had to be called to the home regarding an older sibling of the victim child. The family was opened for services to provide supports to the mother and closed in August 2012, when the child went to stay with her father.

The agency screened out a case in April 2014 as it was about the mother not receiving prenatal care, and the victim child was not yet born.

On 10/17/2014, the agency received a referral regarding housing and drug concerns. The mother was found to be living with maternal relatives and receiving full supports. The case was closed in December 2014 after it was determined that the mother was providing appropriate care to the victim child and following up on medical appointments.

The agency screened out a referral on 06/06/2017 after speaking with the mother about a referral received about the victim child's medical care. As there were no allegations of abuse or neglect, the agency did not pursue the case further.

Circumstances of Child Near Fatality and Related Case Activity:

On 01/17/2019, Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency (LCCYA) received a report of suspected child abuse regarding the victim child and injuries sustained while she was in the care of cousins. The mother had left her children with the cousins as she was working night shifts in her job. The father had been incarcerated and the mother lost her apartment and car, so she had found trusted caretakers for the children. She would see the children on the weekends but did not see the children in the weekend prior to the report because she was told they were visiting family in Harrisburg. On 01/17/2019, an ambulance was dispatched to the home of the cousin [REDACTED] to assess the victim child. The mother had called the ambulance after she had received pictures of the victim child from the cousin. When the ambulance arrived at the home, the victim child was found to have second degree burns on her face, neck and chest. There were first degree burns on her face and swelling around her eyes. The cousin stated that the victim child had knocked hot tea over onto her two days prior, but the cousin did not take her for medical care as she feared something would happen to her (the cousin). Upon further examination the victim child was found to have second degree burns to her vagina, labia, lower back and hips. She also had several healing marks, bruises and scars all over her body and a bite to the inside of her right calf. There were hematomas on the back and top of her skull that appeared to be infected. The victim child was taken to [REDACTED] and then transported to [REDACTED] to treat her burns. The victim child was found to be in serious condition and this was considered to be an investigation of a child near fatality.

The LCCYA caseworker and law enforcement met with the parents and children at the hospital prior to the victim child being transported to [REDACTED]. The father was recently out of prison and expressed wanting to provide for this child. It was determined that the parents could have access to the victim child, but no other caretaker or family member could at the time, due to the number of people that had cared for the victim child and the extent of her injuries. The victim child needed skin grafts on her back due to the extent of the burns. There were also concerns that the victim child had been hit in the head with a hammer as the injuries on her head resembled the shape of a hammer. When the sibling of the victim child received a forensic interview on 01/18/2019, he stated that he had witnessed his sister being hit with a hammer, but that someone would then shut the door. This half-sibling went to stay with an aunt during the investigation. The infant sibling

was staying with the victim child's father as the parents were spending a lot of time in [REDACTED] at the hospital.

On 01/25/2019, the LCCYA caseworker and law enforcement visited the child in the hospital and spoke with the physician. It was shared that the child had liver damage due to being hit hard in the stomach. She also had a staph infection throughout her body, which was believed to be caused by not receiving medical care immediately after the burns occurred. The victim child appeared to be in pain but was alert.

On 02/02/2019, the cousin [REDACTED] was arrested and placed in Lancaster County Prison as it was determined that she was the sole caretaker of the victim child in the days leading up to the report. On 02/05/2019, the LCCYA caseworker went to the Lancaster County Prison to speak with the cousin. She continued to state that the victim child had spilled tea on herself but didn't show injuries until days later, so she didn't seek medical care. She also stated that as long as the victim child isn't permanently injured then she is ok because she didn't do anything wrong.

On 02/08/2019, the victim child was released to the paternal grandmother, who would assure that the child attended her follow up doctor appointments. The parents had full access to the child at the grandmother's home.

Lancaster County CYA filed their investigation report with ChildLine on 03/04/2019 with a status of Indicated for causing bodily injury and serious physical neglect. It was determined that the cousin [REDACTED] had caused the burns to the child and did not seek medical treatment. As the child had various bruising and cuts in various states of healing, and the child was with several caretakers leading up to the incident, these injuries were unfounded. The cousin was charged with two counts of aggravated assault, 1 count of aggravated assault to someone less than 6, concealment of a child, conspiracy, and endangering the welfare of a child. She remains incarcerated at the Lancaster County Prison.

The cousin would not state how the burns to the victim child occurred. However, there was discussion during the county Act 33 meeting that there was a facial steamer in the home of the cousin that could have been used to burn the victim child. Some of the burns on the victim child were similarly shaped to the steamer.

Throughout the course of the investigation, the agency conducted two additional investigations. One investigation received on 01/23/2019 concerned the [REDACTED]. It was determined that the [REDACTED] of the child and impairment was not noted. This investigation was unfounded. Another investigation was initiated on 01/25/2019 regarding the victim child and the healing wounds that were found in her genital area. It was believed that these injuries could have been related to sexual abuse. This investigation was also unfounded as it could not be determined how the injuries were caused, and there was the possibility that they could have been caused by the victim child herself.

On 03/27/2019, the agency received a new child abuse report as they had received information regarding pictures that were found on the cousin's [REDACTED] phone and were sent to caretaker/cousin [REDACTED]. In these pictures, the victim child was shown standing naked against the wall with her hands tied behind her back and underwear stuffed in her mouth. There was also another picture where the victim child was on her stomach in the bathtub with her hands tied behind her back and an inch of water in the tub that the victim child was then arching her back to hold her head out of the water. These were determined to occur at caretaker/cousin [REDACTED] home in October 2018. There was also a video of the victim child screaming while the two women hit her with a spatula. Caretaker/cousin [REDACTED] was arrested and incarcerated on 03/29/2019 and charged with Endangering the Welfare of Children and Conspiracy-Endangering the Welfare of Children. Both women admitted to the actions against the victim child in these pictures and videos. LCCYA indicated the case against both perpetrators on 05/23/19.

The family was opened for ongoing services with the agency to address housing concerns and assure that medical follow up continued for all of the children. All of the children are currently with the parents and a family service plan is being implemented. Caretaker/cousin [REDACTED] and Caretaker/cousin [REDACTED] are awaiting trial.

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;
 - An immediate response time was assigned, and the Agency met with the child and parents the same day.
 - The Agency assessed the other children in the home to assure their safety.
 - Arrangements were made to have the half-sibling interviewed by the [REDACTED]
 - The Agency completed Safety and Risk Assessments on the family to help guide their practice.
 - A very collaborative investigation has occurred for this case between the hospital, police and Children and Youth Agency.
- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
 - None noted.
- 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 noted.
- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies;
 - None noted.

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.
 - The Act 33 committee identified the ongoing need for affordable emergency housing.
 - The Agency talked about the upcoming Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Campaign efforts that will be promoted in April. There was discussion about the importance of the community saying something if child abuse is suspected. More efforts should be made to promote child abuse prevention year-round, creating a society that encourages people to speak up if they have concerns. There was evidence presented during the meeting that illustrated that the victim child was in the community with her injuries and no one had expressed any concerns.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

The Central Region Office received the Lancaster County Child Near Fatality Team Report on 05/16/2019. DHS finds the county's internal report as an accurate reflection of the Act 33 meeting. The report content and findings are representative of what was discussed during the meeting on 02/06/2019. As case activity continued beyond the Act 33 meeting, there are findings that are not incorporated into the county report and will be addressed by DHS findings. Written feedback was provided to Lancaster County Administration on 05/29/2019.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths:
 - Collaboration between LCCYA, law enforcement, and hospital staff was observed throughout case involvement. There was a lot of consultation with medical staff to determine appropriate outcomes of investigations.
 - The agency worker handled all aspects of the case, juggling investigating the abuse incidents to supporting the parents as they made plans of care for their children.
 - The agency caseworkers have worked collaboratively across the many cases opened due to this report. Documentation shows the caseworkers supporting each other and conducting joint interviews.
- County Weaknesses:
 - None noted.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency.
 - None noted.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

No recommendations are being noted by the Department at this time.