



REPORT ON THE FATALITY

Baby Girl Wheeler

Date of Birth: 04/13/2017

Date of Death: 04/13/2017

Date of Report to ChildLine: 04/14/2017

CWIS Referral ID: [REDACTED]

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

Lycoming County Children and Youth

REPORT FINALIZED ON:

12/01/2017

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.

Lycoming 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 05/09/2017.

Family Constellation:

<u>First and Last Name:</u>	<u>Relationship:</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>
[REDACTED]*	Biological Father	[REDACTED] 1982
[REDACTED]	Biological Mother	[REDACTED] 1979
Baby Girl Wheeler (unnamed)	Victim child	04/13/2017
[REDACTED]	Full sibling	[REDACTED] 2008
[REDACTED]	Full sibling	[REDACTED] 2012

*Was not residing in the home at the time of the death of the child. He was incarcerated.

Summary of OCYF Child Fatality Review Activities:

The Central Region Office of Children, Youth and Families (CRO) obtained and reviewed all case records pertaining to the family, which included medical records and the agency casework dictation that outlined contact with the family. A discussion occurred with the Lycoming County Children and Youth (LCCY) program specialist on 04/14/2017 and 4/17/2017. The CRO did attend the Act 33 meeting on 05/09/2017.

Children and Youth Involvement prior to Incident:

Lycoming County Children and Youth first became involved with the family on 05/27/2008. The [REDACTED] allegation was that the victim child’s full sibling was in the hospital [REDACTED]. The father was intoxicated, and the mother had marijuana in her possession and admitted to smoking a small amount. [REDACTED] the agency saw the child in the home and no concerns were identified. The mother presented a clean drug screening at the hospital on 05/27/2008. The family agreed to [REDACTED] services which were in place and were having weekly contact. The agency closed [REDACTED] on 06/25/2008.

On 07/17/2008, the agency received [REDACTED] allegations of domestic violence and illegal drug use in the home. The parents acknowledged fighting, but denied becoming physical. Both parents denied drug use. The father was on probation, and his probation officer confirmed negative drug tests. Home conditions were acceptable and [REDACTED] was closed on 08/21/2008.

On 04/12/2013, the agency received [REDACTED] concerns on parenting, inadequate home furnishings and illegal drug use. The parents were not living together at this time and the report focused on the mother's home and care of the children. The mother's home was visited and was acceptable for the children. During this [REDACTED] the children went to live with the father who received court ordered custody of the children. The agency closed [REDACTED] on 04/26/2013.

On 11/04/2016, the agency received [REDACTED] concerns regarding domestic violence and parent substance abuse. The parents were separated at this time and the children continued to visit both parents per a custody court order. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The agency closed the referral on 01/03/2017 after the concerns were addressed and rectified.

On 01/31/2017, the agency received [REDACTED] concerns regarding domestic violence and [REDACTED] concerns on the victim child's full siblings. The father assaulted the mother, causing serious injury. The father was incarcerated and sentenced to nearly two years in prison. Domestic violence was validated and the [REDACTED] concerns of the children were not validated. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The agency was aware that mother was pregnant. The mother [REDACTED] and no concerns were noted during the assessment period. The agency closed the referral on 03/31/2017.

Circumstances of Child Fatality and Related Case Activity:

Lycoming County Children and Youth Services received [REDACTED] Report [REDACTED] stating that on 04/13/2017, the mother went into premature labor and gave birth to a baby in the bathroom of her home. According to [REDACTED], the baby was born alive. The mother did not seek medical attention and the 27 week old child died. The mother reported that she gave birth to the baby who fell into the toilet. The mother removed the child from the toilet and placed the baby into a box. The mother cleaned up the bathroom and herself. The mother also washed clothing and towels. The mother then contacted a friend and placed the child into the back of the car. The mother then proceeded to get high with her friend at an unknown location. The mother and her friend then drove to [REDACTED] Hospital where the mother took the baby into the emergency room which was approximately 12 hours after the child's birth. [REDACTED] contacted the police with suspicious death/miscarriage. Reports to ChildLine and Lycoming County Children and Youth Services also occurred at that time.

The mother admitted to using drugs on 04/12/2017 and tested positive for heroin, cocaine [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The mother then was incarcerated initially for a probation violation; she had been on probation for shoplifting and had been due for release in late April 2017. She has since been charged with abuse of a corpse, flight to avoid apprehension, obstruction of the administration of law/government function and tampering with/fabricating physical evidence.

At the time of the incident, the victim child's siblings were with the paternal grandparents. After the mother's incarceration, the siblings continued to stay with the paternal grandparents. However, the paternal grandparents felt unable to care for the children on an ongoing basis and identified another kinship resource. On 05/11/2017, the victim child's siblings [REDACTED] were placed in an approved kinship home and since then have adjusted well.

At the time of the incident, the father was incarcerated for assaulting the mother in late October 2016. The father was released from prison on 06/05/2017 and is being provided reunification services from LCCYS. The victim child's sibling's goal is reunification with a concurrent goal of adoption.

The preliminary autopsy showed that the child was still born and was not touched after being placed in the box. The agency marked [REDACTED] on 06/13/2017. The final forensic autopsy confirmed the preliminary autopsy results, so the agency updated their finding [REDACTED] on 08/31/2017.

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

- Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
Lycoming CYS was viewed as compliant with statutes, regulations, and service provision. There is an active MDIT and an established child abuse protocol for the mutual investigation of abuse cases.
- Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families;
No deficiencies were 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;
The team did not feel there were interventions that could have been made by LCCYS to prevent this fatality. No additional recommendations were made.

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

- Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on collaboration of community agencies and service providers to prevent child abuse.
None reported

Department Review of County Internal Report:

The Lycoming County Child Death Review Team held an Act 33 meeting on 05/09/2017 where medical and case information were presented. The county report of the Act 33 meeting was received by the CRO on 06/13/2017. On 06/14/2017, the CRO sent correspondence to LCCY Administrator, via letter that the report was reviewed and the regional office accepted the county report.

Department of Human Services Findings:

- County Strengths:
 - The agency responded to the referral immediately.
 - Agency personnel conducted joint interviews with Law Enforcement and communicated well with each other.
 - The agency's Act 33 meeting was well represented by county personnel, medical providers, and law enforcement. The meeting was very thorough.
 - The agency utilized family to assure safety of the siblings.
- County Weaknesses: and
None noted.
- Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency.
After review of the file, the agency was found to be in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

The Department does not have any recommendations at this time.