

REPORT ON THE FATALITY

Gionni Dennis

Date of Birth: 08/27/2011
Date of Incident: 06/08/2019
Date of Report to ChildLine: 06/11/2019
CWIS Referral ID:

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

Cumberland County Children and Youth

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

Dauphin County Children and Youth

REPORT FINALIZED ON:

12/19/2019

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.

Dauphin County has convened a review team in accordance with the Child Protective Services Law related to this report. Cumberland County participated in the Dauphin County review. The county review team was convened on 06/28/2019.

Family Constellation:

First and Last Name	Relationship	Date of Birth
Gionni Dennis	Victim child	08/27/2011
	Biological Mother	1990
	Stepfather	1992
	Maternal half-sibling	2009
	Tenant where incident	1981
	Occurred	
	Maternal Great Aunt	1962

^{*} These individuals are not house hold members but were involved in the case.

Summary of OCYF Child Fatality Review Activities:

The Central Region Office of Children, Youth and Families (CRO) reviewed all case records pertaining to the family. An initial discussion occurred with the Assistant Administrator on 06/11/2019 along with several additional discussions with the Administrator during the month of June. The CRO did attend the Act 33 meeting on 06/28/2019.

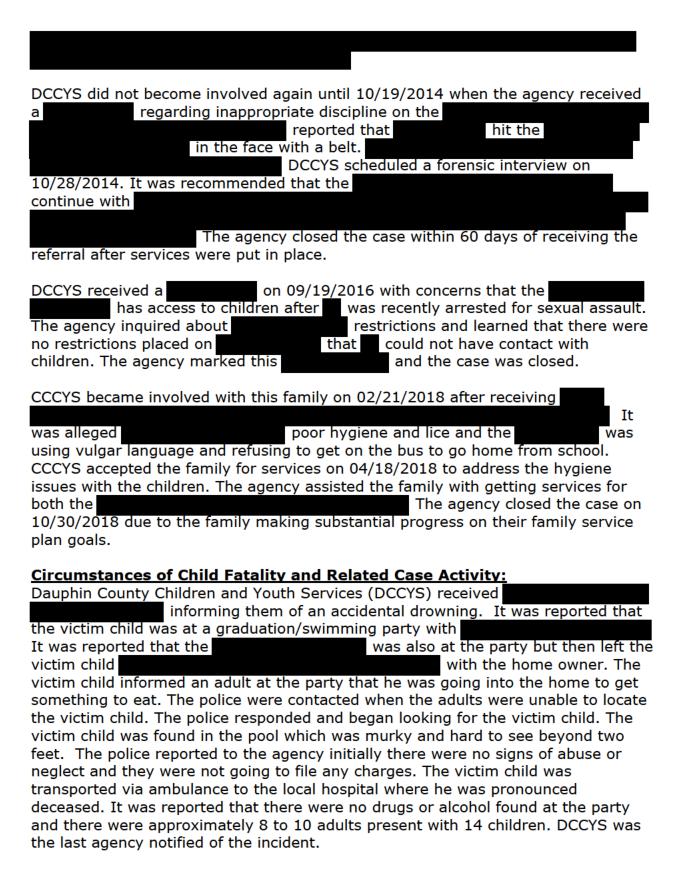
Summary of Circumstances prior to Incident:

Dauphin County Children and Youth Services (DCCYS) and Cumberland County Children and Youth Services (CCCYS) both had prior involvement with this family. DCCYS prior involvement started on 3/22/2004 with receipt of a referral regarding the

The agency accepted the family for services and eventually

Prior to placing that child in

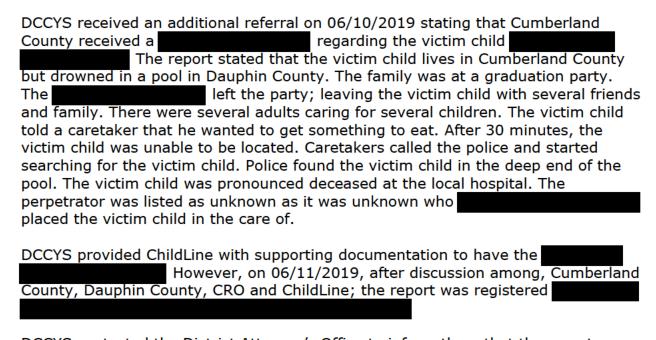
the agency placed the child informally with the



DCCYS on call worker contacted the agency's Director of Social Services to inform her of the information just received. The on-call worker was instructed to contact Cumberland County Children and Youth Services since the police are ruling this as an accident; to explain to them about the accidental drowning since the family resided in Cumberland County and could benefit from services due to the death of the victim child.

CCCYS reported that they had history with the family but was not currently opened with the family. CCCYS questioned whether this information was called into ChildLine. DCCYS services told CCCYS that they did not contact ChildLine since they were providing the information directly to their agency.

DCCYS also confirmed with the District Attorney's office that they received the same information from the police as the agency.

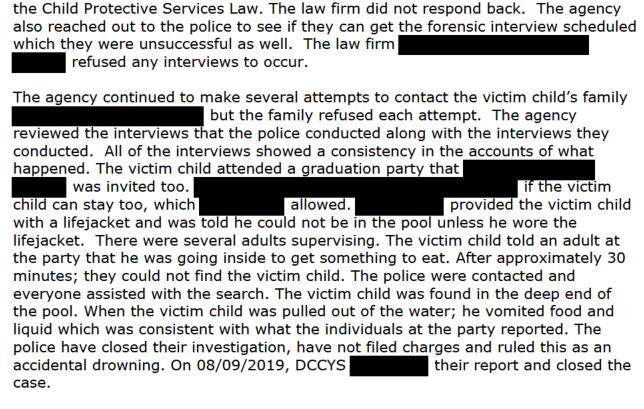


The agency learned that the autopsy was held earlier that morning and they were awaiting the test results. The deputy coroner on the scene identified accidental drowning as the preliminary cause of death. The agency also notified the local police that the case was now registered as a fatality and will be initiating the Joint Investigative Team (JIT).

The local police shared with DCCYS that at the time they made the call to their agency; there were no concerns of supervision or suspicion of abuse or neglect when the incident occurred. The police shared that on the date of the incident; they interviewed

The police reported that they were told the child went into the house to get something to eat and when he didn't come back out; they went into the home to find him. When the victim child could not be found; they spread out to look for the victim child. It was explained that there was wooded area around and they wanted

other children out to the neighborhood to look for the victim child as well. The police noted that noodles to prevent any accident from happening. It was reported that the victim child did not know how to swim. When the victim child was in the pool earlier; the victim child wore a life jacket. There were at 8 to 10 adults watching 10 to 14 children. The victim child told one of the adults he was going inside to get something to eat. When the victim child could not be found; the police were contacted. The victim child was found by one of the adults in the deep end of the pool, under water. The victim child was pulled from the water; food and liquids were vomited which corroborated the victim child recently getting something to eat. There were 4 adults by the pool at the time of the drowning along with numerous floatation devices. There was no evidence of the adults being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. DCCYS requested copies of the police report along with interviews conducted and requested to be included in future interviews.
DCCYS made a call to the agency would need to see the safety. The agreed to the visit and shared that the
said all other appointments would need to go through the attorney's office. The shared that a memorial service was held for the victim child. reported that the were having a difficult time but family and the school have been a big support to the family.
The agency arrived for the announced home visit later that day to see was at the home. The way home. The way home. The way home. We in the announced home visit later that day to see
While the caseworker was gathering demographic information; the who scheduled this visit came home. The agency caseworker asked the family if they had other resources other than family support. The family reported that the church and school have been a big support to them
agency caseworker then explained the investigation process. The agency caseworker was told that they are familiar with the process of forensic interviews as they have been through that process in the past. The agency caseworker explained that at this time there is an unknown alleged perpetrator were
listed as alleged perpetrators. The told the agency caseworker that the family was done and all further questions would need to go through the attorney's office and asked the agency caseworker to leave. The agency caseworker provided business card along with information before leaving the home.
DCCYS contacted the law firm the very next day at the request of the family. The law firm requested and said would then consult with others who have knowledge in the area of child abuse and get back to the agency. DCCYS consulted



with their solicitor who then provided information to the law firm with regards to

<u>Summary of County Strengths, Deficiencies and Recommendations for Change as Identified by the County's Child Fatality Report:</u>

 Strengths in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children and families:

Cross-county collaboration to obtain information regarding the family in Cumberland County.

Collaboration with law enforcement to obtain police records, information from family due to their unwillingness to communicate directly with CYS.

Resources received to better educate our staff and service to the population.

• <u>Deficiencies in compliance with statutes, regulations and services to children</u> and families:

The report was not initially registered correctly with ChildLine which caused a lack of cooperation between the agency and the family.

 Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on reducing the likelihood of future child fatalities and near fatalities directly related to abuse: Upon receiving information of a child fatality or near fatality, this information will be registered with ChildLine, even if the information received suggests the incident was a possible accident.

Recommendations for changes at the state and local levels on monitoring and inspection of county agencies:

No recommendations identified.

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

No recommendations identified.

Department Review of County Internal Report:

The Dauphin County Child Death Review Team held an Act 33 meeting on 06/28/2019 where case information was presented. The county report of the Act 33 meeting was received by the CRO on 10/07/2019. On 10/30/2019, the CRO sent correspondence to DCCYS 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 collaborated 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 and the agency implemented their Act 33 policies and procedures.

The agency made numerous attempts with the family and their attorney.

Although the family asked the caseworker to leave; the caseworker still provided the family with information

County Weaknesses:

The report was not initially registered correctly with ChildLine which could have contributed to the family's unwillingness to cooperate.

Statutory and Regulatory Areas of Non-Compliance by the County Agency:

After review of the file; the agency was found to be in non-compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The agency received a citation under 3130.21(b), CPSL 6311(a)(5)(b)(1)(i) and 6313(a)(1): An agency staff

person became aware of the death of a child and did not report the alleged child abuse to ChildLine as prescribed in the Child Protective Services Law. In addition, the staff person did not report concerns to ChildLine of a family who lived in a neighboring county. The executive officers shall ensure that the agency is operated in conformity with applicable Federal, State and local statutes, ordinances and regulations. The following adults shall make a report of suspected child abuse, subject to subsection (b), if the person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse: An employee of a child-care service who has direct contact with children in the course of employment. A mandated reporter shall immediately make an oral report of suspected child abuse to the department via the Statewide toll-free telephone number under section 6332 or a written report using electronic technologies under section 6305.

Department of Human Services Recommendations:

The Department has no recommendations at this time.