

## **Fatalities:**

### **Indiana County:**

1-2. Two female siblings, ages eleven and six, died on June 1, 2012 due to physical injuries. Indiana County Children and Youth Services substantiated both reports in July of 2012 and named the father as the perpetrator. The father had cut the throat of the six-year old with a hunting knife and then went outside of the home and shot the family's pet goat, pony and dog. Soon after this, the eleven-year old had returned home from school and the father cut her throat with a hunting knife. The father then drove to the home of the children's mother and cut her throat and set fire to the mother's home. The father returned to his house and set fire to his house. The parents do not have any other children. This family was not known to the county agency prior to the incident. The father has been charged with three counts of criminal homicide and is currently incarcerated.

### **Philadelphia County:**

3. An eleven-month old child died on May 11, 2012 due to ingesting methadone. Philadelphia Department of Human Services substantiated the report in June of 2012 and named the father as the perpetrator. The father found the child unresponsive in his crib and the mother contacted emergency responders. The child was pronounced deceased at the hospital. A preliminary report from the medical examiner's office was released the following day stating that the child tested positive for methadone. Both parents are recovering heroin addicts and receive treatment through methadone clinics. The father admitted during the investigation that he had put methadone in the child's bottle. There were trace amounts of methadone found in the child's bottle. There had been a prior referral to the county agency when the child was born regarding mother being a heroin addict. No services were implemented at that time. There is an older sibling who is currently in formal kinship care with a paternal grandmother due to the incident. There is an ongoing criminal investigation; however, no criminal charges have been filed.

4-5. Twin siblings, one female and one male, one year of age, died on May 24, 2012 due to drowning and suffocation. Philadelphia Department of Human Services substantiated both reports in June of 2012 and named the mother as the perpetrator. The father had returned home from work and found the mother and the two children unresponsive. The father contacted emergency responders. The two children were determined by the emergency responders to be deceased. However, the mother was still alive. The mother had tried to commit suicide by slitting her wrists and also took a large amount of unknown pills. It was determined that the mother had also given the unknown pills to both children. The mother then drowned the female child in the bathtub and suffocated the male child with a pillow. There is an older sibling of the children who was also at home when these incidents occurred. This sibling was given pills in her juice; however, she refused to drink her juice. This sibling was examined at the hospital and was found to be unharmed. This sibling continues to reside with her father and services have been offered by the county agency. The mother believed that

the father had been having a relationship with her adult daughter by a prior relationship and this is her reasoning as to why she killed the children. The mother has been charged with homicide and other charges related to attempting to poisoning the sibling. The mother is currently incarcerated.

### **Schuylkill County**

6. A one-year old male child died on April 1, 2012 due to being suffocated. Schuylkill County Children and Youth Services substantiated the report in May of 2012 and named the mother as the perpetrator. The mother contacted emergency responders stating that she found the child unresponsive in his crib. The child later died at the hospital. The child's death was determined to be suspicious. During the investigation, the mother admitted to suffocating the child. The mother said that the child had been crying and she could not take it any longer. She had the child lay on his stomach in his crib and she pushed on his head and back until he stopped breathing. The child had two half-siblings, who live with their father in a different state. The father has sole custody of the half-siblings. The county agency was active with the family on the intake level from November of 2011 until January of 2012 due to domestic violence between the mother and a paramour that had been living with the family at that time and also due to concerns regarding mother's behavioral health issues. There had also been concerns that the mother had unrealistic expectations of the child and was overfeeding the child. The family, including the mother's paramour, moved to a neighboring county in January and the county agency closed the case and decided against referring it to the neighboring county. Additionally, the family had been active in the past with child protective services in Massachusetts involving the half-siblings. Child protective services in Massachusetts were involved due to an extensive behavioral health history with the mother and incidents in which the half-siblings had periodic episodes of stopped breathing due to undetermined causes. The mother has been charged with criminal homicide and aggravated assault and is currently incarcerated.

### **Somerset County**

7. A fifteen-year old male child died on September 15, 2011 due to a gunshot wound. Somerset County Children and Youth Services (CYS) substantiated the report in May 2012 and named the father as the perpetrator. The father was sitting at a desk cleaning his .38 Caliber hand gun. The child was in the same room, lying on a couch. The child jokingly said, "Shoot me, Dad, shoot me." The father pointed the gun in the direction of the child and the gun discharged a bullet that struck the child on the right side below his armpit. The bullet entered the right lung, went into the left lung, passed through a rib, and struck the jugular vein. The child was transported to Somerset Hospital for treatment but died shortly after arrival due to his injuries. The father said he believed he had removed the clip from the pistol; however, police discovered that the gun contained four live rounds in the clip and one live round in the chamber. In June 2011, Somerset CYS received a referral on this family which stated that there was no food in the home. A caseworker visited the home and found sufficient food, but was concerned about the cluttered home conditions. The caseworker returned to the home in mid-June 2011 and found the home conditions appropriate, and the case was closed. The family now

resides in Fayette County. There is a 12 year old female sibling in the home. Fayette County CYS saw the sibling at school in May 2012, and she reported no concerns or fear in her home. The county assessed the home and determined that there were no safety threats found. The father has been charged with Involuntary Manslaughter and Reckless Endangerment. A preliminary hearing was held in April 2012. The father waived the charges to court and is currently residing at home awaiting his trial.

## **Near Fatalities**

### **Bucks County**

1. A three-month old male child nearly died on April 12, 2012 due to physical abuse. Bucks County Children and Youth Services (CYS) substantiated the report in April 2012 and named the child's babysitter as the perpetrator. The child's parents were cleared through a CYS and Police investigation which included a polygraph examination. The child was in the care of the babysitter at the time of injury. The child was brought to the Emergency Room at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia on April 11, 2012 due to lethargy and extreme irritability. The child was seen and discharged, only to return on April 13, 2012 due to vomiting and a poor appetite. The child was admitted to the hospital on April 13, 2012 and given a full skeletal scan. The child was diagnosed with subdural bleeding of the brain, bilateral hemorrhaging in both eyes, and bilateral hemorrhaging on the top and side of both frontal lobes of the brain. Also found was an acceleration/deceleration injury consistent with shaken baby syndrome. The child's injuries were determined to be the result of non-accidental trauma. The perpetrator is now allowed supervised access to her own children and is not allowed to care for any other children. The police continue to investigate this incident. Neither the victim's family nor the perpetrator's family were known to CYS within the last 16 months or were receiving services through other community service providers. The child is currently doing well and receiving regular pediatric and ophthalmology care. The child is expected to make a full recovery, but the impact on the child's long-term development is still unclear.

### **Cumberland County**

2. On April 25, 2012 a near fatality report was received on a two year old female. Cumberland County Children and Youth Services indicated the report in June 2012, naming the mother's paramour as the perpetrator. On April 23, 2012 the mother and her paramour called an ambulance after the child vomited, collapsed, and turned blue. The child may have had seizure activity. The child was taken to Holy Spirit Hospital and was unresponsive where she was put on a ventilator and intubated. The child was then transferred to Hershey Medical Center on this same date. Over the course of the next two days various tests were run on the child and a computed tomography (CT) scan showed air in the soft tissue of her neck, which indicates a severe blunt force injury, suffocation, or strangulation. Upon receiving the results of the tests on April 25, 2012, it was determined that the child's condition was a result of abuse or non-accidental trauma and the report was registered as a near fatality on this date. HMC noted that the child had a bruise on top of her right shoulder, but no other remarkable visible injuries.

The hospital also noted that the child was exceedingly dirty and had head lice. The mother and her paramour also presented with hygiene issues. Although the mother and her paramour initially claimed that there was no injury to the child, the mother's paramour later provided law enforcement with a partial confession, in which he stated he was "horsing around" with the child with a pillow and may have placed the pillow over the child for too long. The mother was in the home at the time of the incident, but was in another room. CYS received a referral on the family due to poor hygiene and home conditions in April of 2011. The report alleged that the mother, her three children, and the mother's paramour were all sleeping on a couch/futon at their home. The agency assessed the referral and concluded that the family did not need agency services at that time. The child has been released from the hospital and is in stable condition. The mother, child, and her two siblings are currently living in the maternal grandparents' home. The mother's paramour is not living in the home and does not have access to the children. Law enforcement conducted a criminal investigation and will not be filing charges in this case.

### **Delaware County**

3. A two-month old female child nearly died on April 20, 2012. Delaware County Children and Youth Services indicated the report in May 2012, naming the father as the perpetrator. The mother was at work at the time of the incident and the father was alone with the children. The father reported that he washed the child and then left the room, leaving the child on the bed. The father states that the child "scooped" off the bed and fell. The father reported that child was unresponsive after falling off the bed. The father also reported that the child had a seizure when he found her. The father called a friend to transport them to the hospital because he said that 911 "took too long." The father took the child to Taylor Hospital, a small community hospital without a trauma center, but she was then transferred to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The child was diagnosed with subdural and subarachnoid bleeds, hypoxic and ischemic brain injury, bruises to both thighs, and bruise on the right eyelid. The child required a blood transfusion. It was noted that the child's injuries were not consistent with the father's story and physical abuse was suspected. The child was discharged from the hospital in June and placed into a medical foster home. The child currently has a feeding tube and is being followed closely as there are concerns about her vision. There is no history of CYS involvement with the family. The child has a twin brother and an older sister who are in the care of the mother. The father was charged with Aggravated Assault, Simple Assault, Recklessly Endangering Another Person, and Endangering the Welfare of Children. The father is incarcerated pending trial, with bail set at \$75,000.

### **Lawrence County**

4. A ten month-old male child nearly died on March 29, 2012 due to physical neglect. The Western Region Office of Children, Youth, and Families substantiated the case in May 2012 listing the child's maternal aunt as the perpetrator. The child had been placed with the aunt in October 2011, due to mother's inability to care for the child. Medical records showed that the child did not start to decline in weight until the child was placed with the aunt. The aunt brought the child to the hospital on March 29, 2012 to see a specialist regarding the helmet the child was prescribed to wear. The child was prescribed this helmet due to concerns about his head being misshapen. Due to the child being emaciated, the aunt was advised to take the child to the emergency department where he was subsequently admitted. At the time of admittance the child was in the 4<sup>th</sup> percentile for weight. The aunt reported concerns to her pediatrician about the child swallowing properly and brought these concerns up again while the child was at the emergency department. It was determined the child was having difficulty swallowing due to his muscles relaxing and not working properly due to malnutrition. The child received surgery to repair muscle and tissue around his epiglottis. Once this surgery was completed the child started to gain weight. Medical records show that the aunt had a history for missing medical appointments for the child. The aunt also admitted to not following through with intervention services while the child was in her care. While the child was in the care of the aunt, the county children and youth agency as well as the kinship care agency were conducting home visits. During these visits the children and youth agency and the kinship care agency did not observe this child while he was alert and active, only while sleeping. The child was discharged from the hospital and was placed into a medical foster home where he remains and is thriving. He is continuing to gain weight. The child had a sibling who, at the time of the incident, was residing with the maternal great grandmother. Upon further investigation, it was determined that the grandmother had placed the sibling into the aunt's care as well. The county children and youth agency conducted a safety assessment of this child and placed her back into the care of her grandmother. Law enforcement is not continuing their investigation.

### **Montgomery County**

5. A two-and-a-half year old male child nearly died on May 8, 2012. Montgomery County Children and Youth Services (CYS) indicated the case in June 2012, naming the mother as the perpetrator. The child was found by a construction worker on the ground near the home after falling from a third floor window. The family lives in a three story duplex with a second floor roof, the child fell from the third floor, rolled onto the second floor overhang, and then hit the ground. The child had a pattern of playing near the third floor window. The county agency had previously investigated this concern, and required that the family install locks on the windows of the upper floors. At the time of incident, police noted that the locks were removed from the window from which the child fell. The child was unconscious when found and was taken to Lehigh Valley Hospital, Cedar Crest Campus Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. The child was diagnosed with epidural hematoma, bleeding in the brain, multiple skull fractures, and a broken elbow. He was sedated and put on a ventilator. The child is now in stable condition. This

family was known to CYS. In January 2010, a case was opened for brief services after allegations were made that the father was shaking and yelling at the child, who was two months old at the time. The father denied ever shaking the child. CYS closed with the family in March 2010. In March 2012, CYS received a referral regarding the child crawling out of a window. The caseworker went out to the home within 24 hours and suggested that the family purchase locks for the windows. The mother did not seem very concerned about the child's safety, but the maternal grandmother, who also lives in the home, agreed to purchase and install locks. The worker went to the home two weeks later and observed that all of the third floor windows had child-proof locks. The case was closed at the end of March 2012. The household includes one other minor, a 17 year-old cousin, who is not in danger of falling out of the windows. The case was referred to law enforcement, but no criminal charges are being filed.

### **Philadelphia**

6. A five year-old male child nearly died on April 7, 2012 due to injuries sustained by a gunshot. The Philadelphia Department of Human Services substantiated the case in May 2012 listing mother as the perpetrator for lack of supervision. The child found the mother's gun under her pillow. The child shot himself in the chest while the mother was in the downstairs area of the home. The mother stated that she thought the child was also downstairs at the time of the incident. The child was hospitalized after the incident and required numerous surgeries to repair damage to his internal organs. The child's stomach required repair and the child had to have a kidney removed. Upon discharge, the child was returned to his mother's care. The mother asked the police to keep the gun that was used in the incident as she no longer wanted it back. This was the only gun in the home. The family was accepted for services and the mother is working with an in-home team on positive parenting. The police completed their investigation and determined that charges would not be filed in the case.

7. A three year-old female child nearly died on April 6, 2012. The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) substantiated the case in April 2012 listing the mother as a perpetrator for physical abuse. The mother brought the child to the hospital on April 6, 2012. The mother told the hospital that the child fell down 4-5 steps while walking the dog down the steps. The victim child sustained a severe spinal injury that has resulted in paralysis of her lower extremities. Additionally, the child had bruises to her face, buttocks, legs, and back. It was felt that the explanation provided by the mother did not match the extent of the injuries. After the investigation started, the child's 4 year-old sister was also brought into the hospital for examination and was determined to have bruises to both of her eyes, an ear, and her shoulder. DHS also substantiated this case listing the mother as the perpetrator. The sister was placed into a medical foster home. It is hoped that the victim child, who is currently at a rehabilitation hospital, will be able to join her sister in this foster home. The mother had supervised visitation with both of the children, but has since been arrested and incarcerated on charges of aggravated assault, endangering the welfare of children, simple assault, and recklessly endangering another person related to this incident.

8. A three month-old male child nearly died on April 17, 2012 due to injuries sustained from physical abuse. The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) substantiated the case in June 2012 listing the mother, father, and maternal grandmother as perpetrators. The mother and father brought the child to the hospital on April 17, 2012 due to the child not feeding, being limp, and screaming in pain. Upon exam, it was determined that the child had sustained an acute subdural hemorrhage, old and new rib fractures, posterior parietal and occipital lobe infarcts, and multiple, multi-layer retinal hemorrhages. DHS determined the child was in the care of each of the perpetrators during the time frame that the injuries could have occurred. The police are continuing their investigation at this time. There are no other siblings in this home. The child was discharged from the hospital to a rehabilitation facility. He was then discharged from the rehabilitation facility and placed into a medical foster home. He was initially receiving in-home nursing services but those have been discontinued due to the child's progress. The court has ordered that both parents are allowed supervised visits with the child.

9. A four month-old male child nearly died on May 28, 2012 due to medical neglect. The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) substantiated the case in June 2012 listing the mother, maternal grandmother, and maternal aunt as perpetrators. The child and the mother resided in an efficiency apartment with the maternal grandmother, the maternal aunt, and the maternal aunt's five year-old child. The child was brought to the hospital by his mother on May 28, 2012 due to constipation. The child was seizing upon arrival to the hospital. Upon exam it was determined that the child had severely low blood pressure and sodium levels. The child was extremely underweight and had wasting of his extremities. The child had a medical history of being born premature and having heart issues. The child had been in the hospital for at least a week after his birth. The mother was instructed to have the child seen by a cardiologist but this never occurred. Once at the hospital the child was diagnosed as failure to thrive. The maternal grandmother and the maternal aunt were substantiated as perpetrators because they were living in the home with the child, observed that the child was not doing well prior to his hospitalization, and took no steps to help the child by calling 911 or taking the child to the hospital. The victim child has been released from the hospital and is currently in a foster family home. A referral has been made for early intervention, but as of the writing of this summary services have not yet been provided. The mother has supervised visits with the child at DHS. The goal for this child is to be reunified with his mother. While there was no current DHS involvement with the family at the time of the incident, the family had been previously involved with DHS. The mother has four other children who have either been adopted or are living with relatives. The mother was substantiated in 2001 by DHS for physical abuse of one of these older children who was four months old at the time. This child had sustained a chip fracture of his left tibia. The aunt has voluntarily placed her own child into the care of his biological father until she is able to find appropriate housing for herself and her child. The police have concluded their investigation and will not be filing charges related to this incident.

### **York County**

10. A nine month-old female child nearly died on April 26, 2012 due to non-accidental head trauma. York County Children and Youth Services substantiated the report in June 2012 and listed the mother, the father, and a family friend they were residing with as perpetrators for physical abuse. The child was taken to the hospital from her home via ambulance. The child then had to be life-flighted to a second hospital, Hershey Medical Center, where she received surgery for her injuries. The child was diagnosed with two brain bleeds and retinal hemorrhaging. One of the brain bleeds was up to three months old. The child and her parents moved into their friend's home due to the family home not having electricity. The explanations that the family provided were inconsistent with the injuries the child sustained. The child's 18 month-old sibling has been placed in the care of the maternal grandmother and her paramour. The child was discharged from the hospital in early May 2012 and was also placed with the maternal grandmother. The family has been accepted for services which include: family group decision making, drug and alcohol evaluation, mental health evaluation, parenting classes, and random drug screenings. The maternal grandmother has been approved as a kinship parent. The criminal investigation is ongoing.