

Report Identification Number: BU-18-019

Prepared by: New York State Office of Children & Family Services

**Issue Date: Nov 14, 2018** 

This report, prepared pursuant to section 20(5) of the Social Services Law (SSL), concerns:  A report made to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) involving the death of a child.
The death of a child for whom child protective services has an open case.
The death of a child whose care and custody or custody and guardianship has been transferred to an authorized agency.
The death of a child for whom the local department of social services has an open preventive service case.

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is mandated by section 20 of the SSL to investigate or cause for the investigation of the cause and circumstances surrounding the death, review such investigation, and prepare and issue a fatality report in regard to the categories of deaths noted above involving a child, except where a local or regional fatality review team issues a report, as authorized by law.

Such report must include: the cause of death; the identification of child protective or other services provided or actions taken regard to such child and child's family; any extraordinary or pertinent information concerning the circumstances of the child's death; whether the child or the child's family received assistance, care or services from the social services district prior to the child's death; any action or further investigation undertaken by OCFS or the social services district since the child's death; and as appropriate, recommendations for local or state administrative or policy changes.

This report contains no information that would identify the deceased child, his or her siblings, the parent, parents, or other persons legally responsible for the child, and any members of the deceased child's household.

By statute, this report will be forwarded to the social services district, chief county executive officer, chairperson of the local legislative body of the county where the child died and the social services district that had legal custody of the child, if different. Notice of the issuance of this report will be sent to the Speaker of the Assembly and the Temporary President of the Senate of the State of New York.

This report may <u>only</u> be disclosed to the public by OCFS pursuant to section 20(5) of the SSL. It may be released by OCFS only after OCFS has determined that such disclosure is not contrary to the best interests of the deceased child's siblings or other children in the household.

OCFS' review included an examination of actions taken by individual caseworkers and supervisors within the social services district and agencies under contract with the social services district. The observations and recommendations contained in this report reflect OCFS' assessment and the performance of these agencies.



# Abbreviations

Relationships						
BM-Biological Mother	SM-Subject Mother	SC-Subject Child				
BF-Biological Father	SF-Subject Father	OC-Other Child				
MGM-Maternal Grand Mother	MGF-Maternal Grand Father	FF-Foster Father				
PGM-Paternal Grand Mother	PGF-Paternal Grand Father	DCP-Day Care Provider				
MGGM-Maternal Great Grand Mother	MGGF-Maternal Great Grand Father	PGGF-Paternal Great Grand Father				
PGGM-Paternal Great Grand Mother	MA/MU-Maternal Aunt/Maternal Uncle	PA/PU-Paternal Aunt/Paternal Uncle				
FM-Foster Mother	SS-Surviving Sibling	PS-Parent Sub				
CH/CHN-Child/Children	OA-Other Adult					
	Contacts					
LE-Law Enforcement	CW-Case Worker	CP-Case Planner				
DrDoctor	ME-Medical Examiner	EMS-Emergency Medical Services				
DC-Day Care	FD-Fire Department	BM-Biological Mother				
CPS-Child Protective Services						
Allegations						
FX-Fractures	II-Internal Injuries	L/B/W-Lacerations/Bruises/Welts				
S/D/S-Swelling/Dislocation/Sprains	C/T/S-Choking/Twisting/Shaking	B/S-Burns/Scalding				
P/Nx-Poisoning/ Noxious Substance	XCP-Excessive Corporal Punishment	PD/AM-Parent's Drug Alcohol Misuse				
CD/A-Child's Drug/Alcohol Use	LMC-Lack of Medical Care	EdN-Educational Neglect				
EN-Emotional Neglect	SA-Sexual Abuse	M/FTTH-Malnutrition/Failure-to-thrive				
IF/C/S-Inadequate Food/ Clothing/ Shelter	IG-Inadequate Guardianship	LS-Lack of Supervision				
Ab-Abandonment	OTH/COI-Other					
	Miscellaneous					
IND-Indicated	UNF-Unfounded	SO-Sexual Offender				
Sub-Substantiated	Unsub-Unsubstantiated	DV-Domestic Violence				
LDSS-Local Department of Social	ACS-Administration for Children's	NYPD-New York City Police				
Service	Services	Department				
PPRS-Purchased Preventive Rehabilitative Services	TANF-Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	FC-Foster Care				
MH-Mental Health	ER-Emergency Room	COS-Court Ordered Services				
OP-Order of Protection	RAP-Risk Assessment Profile	FASP-Family Assessment Plan				
FAR-Family Assessment Response	Hx-History	Tx-Treatment				
CAC-Child Advocacy Center	PIP-Program Improvement Plan	yo- year(s) old				
CPR-Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation						



#### **Case Information**

**Report Type:** Child Deceased **Jurisdiction:** Erie **Date of Death:** 07/02/2018

Age: 5 year(s) Gender: Male Initial Date OCFS Notified: 07/02/2018

#### **Presenting Information**

An SCR report received on 07/02/2018 alleged that the 5-year-old male SC fell down a flight of stairs, sustained a large contusion to the right side of his head, was foaming at the mouth and vomiting. The SM found the conscious child at the bottom of the stairs and carried him upstairs to lay down. The SM failed to contact EMS, but called a neighbor for assistance. The neighbor contacted the local fire department, who responded and found the child deceased, and notified LE. It was unknown how long it was before the fire department was contacted. The injury was consistent with a fall.

#### **Executive Summary**

On 07/02/18, Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) received an SCR report regarding the death of the 5-year-old SC. The report alleged the SM was the sole caretaker of the SC when he fell down a flight of stairs. The SM failed to seek prompt medical attention for the SC, resulting in his death. The SC was an otherwise healthy child.

The family had moved to the United States during the month prior to the fatal incident, and was not familiar with societal norms, laws or available resources, including 911.

The ME was contacted, and an autopsy showed the cause of death was accidental, and the manner of death was "blunt impacts head injuries".

The safety of the 3 SS was assessed by ECDSS immediately after receiving the SCR report. ECDSS took extensive steps to locate both members of the community as well as professional translators to effectively communicate with the family. There were no concerns for the safety of the children.

ECDSS coordinated the investigation with LE. LE and the local fire department were among the first responders to the scene. ECDSS and LE spoke with the family several times throughout the investigation. LE did not reveal any information that supported there was any criminality related to the SC's untimely death.

Significant collateral contacts were made during the investigation to determine the safety of the SS, as well as, network the family with services to assist them in becoming familiarized with United States culture and expectations. ECDSS made extensive efforts to contact first responders, and diligently documented all casework.

The family was linked with community resources including translators, schools, and medical professionals. The family was offered services including preventive services, parenting skills, mental health counseling, bereavement services, and burial and financial assistance. It was unknown if the family utilized burial assistance. Preventive services were declined. The family accepted all other services offered.

ECDSS appropriately unsubstantiated the allegations within the report. The investigation revealed that the family was not familiarized with services available in the United States, including emergency medical services. There was no evidence that the SM intentionally did not obtain emergency assistance for the SC.

## Findings Related to the CPS Investigation of the Fatality

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County where fatality incident occurred:

Was 911 or local emergency number called?

# **Child Fatality Report**

	of Death: 07/02/2018 Time of Death: 04:14 of fatal incident, if different than time of death:	PM Unknown
	Incident Information	
	T wanty related information and investigative	
Are th	rere Required Actions related to the compliance issue(s)? Yes No  Fatality-Related Information and Investigative	Activities
A wo 41-	Required Actions Related to the Fatality	
_	ecision to close the case was appropriate.	
Expla	in:	consultation.
_	sulatory requirements? here sufficient documentation of supervisory consultation?	Yes, the case record has detail of the
Was c	easework activity commensurate with appropriate and relevant statutory	
Casew	work activity was commensurate with case circumstances.  he decision to close the case appropriate?	Yes
Expla	in:	
•	Was the determination made by the district to unfound or indicate appropriate?	Yes
•	Was sufficient information gathered to make determination(s) for all allegations as well as any others identified in the course of the investigation?	Yes, sufficient information was gathered to determine all allegations.
Dotor	mination:	
•	Was the safety decision on the approved Initial Safety Assessment appropriate?	Yes
	<ul> <li>Safety assessment due at the time of determination?</li> </ul>	Yes
	<ul> <li>Approved Initial Safety Assessment?</li> </ul>	Yes
• •	Was sufficient information gathered to make the decision recorded on the:	
Safety	Assessment:	

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Erie

Yes



Time of Call:	o.	01:22 PM
Did EMS respond to the sce		Yes
At time of incident leading t	to death, had child used alcohol or drugs?	No
Child's activity at time of in	cident:	
☐ Sleeping	Working	Driving / Vehicle occupant
☐ Playing	☐ Eating	Unknown
Other: Running		
Did child have supervision a	at time of incident leading to death? Yes	
At time of incident supervis	or was: Not impaired.	
Total number of deaths at i	ncident event:	
Children ages 0-18: 1		
Adults: 0		

#### **Household Composition at time of Fatality**

Household	Relationship	Role	Gender	Age
Deceased Child's Household	Deceased Child	Alleged Victim	Male	5 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Father	No Role	Male	55 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Mother	Alleged Perpetrator	Female	38 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Male	12 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Male	10 Year(s)
Deceased Child's Household	Sibling	No Role	Male	7 Year(s)

#### **LDSS Response**

ECDSS began the investigation on 07/02/18, after receiving an SCR report regarding the death of the SC. ECDSS quickly notified LE and within 24 hours of receiving the report, ECDSS assessed the safety of the SS, evaluated their environment, and noted no concerns. Additionally, ECDSS completed a CPS history check, an accurate 24-hour Safety Assessment and a 24-hour Fatality Report. ECDSS notified the ME and DA and made contact with the source of the report.

During the initial home visit, ECDSS learned the family did not speak English, and recently moved to the United States from another country. ECDSS utilized a community member and family friend in order to speak with the parents and children, due to a language barrier.

ECDSS observed the 3 SS and interviewed SM, BF and community members who were present immediately following the fatal incident. There were no concerns noted for the SS.

Investigation revealed the SM and 7yo SS were home at the time of the fatal incident. The SM reported the SC was preparing to play outside with his SS and ran down a flight of 14 wooden stairs and fell. The 7yo SS was outside at the time of the incident. After hearing the SC tumble down the stairs, SM reported calling for a friend, who came to her aid. The SM was not aware of the EMS services available in the United States. The friend was also unaware of 911. The family stated they did not have experience using stairs prior to moving to the United States, and were struggling with them.

The SM reported finding the child at the bottom of the stairs, and held him across her lap. She did not report seeing any

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injuries on the SC, aside from bump on his head. The SC's eyes were closed and a white substance was coming from his mouth. The child was breathing when the SM carried the child upstairs and put cold water on his face.

The BF, 10yo SS and 12yo SS returned home shortly after the SC fell, and discovered the SM crying while holding the SC. The BF attempted to call 911, but misdialed the number. An unknown person, who ECDSS made diligent attempts to contact, was able to call for help; however, due to the language barrier, the caller did not understand the circumstance, and reported the SC had only fainted.

The family denied performing CPR. LE reported when EMS arrived, the SC was unresponsive and cold to the touch. LE stated the fire department administrated CPR, to no avail. The SC was transported by ambulance to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased.

ECDSS contacted numerous collateral contacts, which included medical providers of the SS, hospital staff, community resources and community members. The family accepted many services that were offered by ECDSS including grief counseling and mental health counseling.

#### Official Manner and Cause of Death

Official Manner: Accident

**Primary Cause of Death:** From an injury - external cause

Person Declaring Official Manner and Cause of Death: Medical Examiner

#### Multidisciplinary Investigation/Review

Was the fatality investigation conducted by a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)? Yes

**Comments:** The fatality was assigned to a Multi-Disciplinary Team.

Was the fatality reviewed by an OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team? No

**Comments:** Erie County does not have an OCFS approved Child Fatality Review Team at this time.

#### **SCR Fatality Report Summary**

Alleged Victim(s)	Alleged Perpetrator(s)	Allegation(s)	Allegation Outcome
047161 - Deceased Child, Male, 5 Yrs	047661 - Mother, Female, 38 Year(s)	DOA / Fatality	Unsubstantiated
047161 - Deceased Child, Male, 5 Yrs	, , ,	Inadequate Guardianship	Unsubstantiated

#### **CPS Fatality Casework/Investigative Activities**

	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
All children observed?	$\boxtimes$			
When appropriate, children were interviewed?	$\boxtimes$			
Alleged subject(s) interviewed face-to-face?	$\boxtimes$			
All 'other persons named' interviewed face-to-face?	$\boxtimes$			



Contact with source?	$\boxtimes$			
All appropriate Collaterals contacted?		$\boxtimes$		
Emergency Room Personnel				
Was a death-scene investigation performed?	$\boxtimes$			
Was there discussion with all parties (youth, other household members, and staff) who were present that day (if nonverbal, observation and comments in case notes)?				
Coordination of investigation with law enforcement?	$\boxtimes$			
Was there timely entry of progress notes and other required documentation?				
Fatality Safety Assessment Activities				
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Were there any surviving siblings or other children in the household?	$\boxtimes$			
Was there an adequate assessment of impending or immediate danger to s household named in the report:	urviving	siblings/o	ther chil	dren in the
Within 24 hours?	$\boxtimes$			
At 7 days?	$\boxtimes$			
At 30 days?	$\boxtimes$			
Was there an approved Initial Safety Assessment for all surviving siblings/ other children in the household within 24 hours?				
Are there any safety issues that need to be referred back to the local district?				
When safety factors were present that placed the surviving siblings/other children in the household in impending or immediate danger of serious harm, were the safety interventions, including parent/caretaker actions adequate?			$\boxtimes$	
Fatality Risk Assessment / Risk Assessment l	Profile			
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Was the risk assessment/RAP adequate in this case?				
During the course of the investigation, was sufficient information gathered to assess risk to all surviving siblings/other children in the household?	$\boxtimes$			
Was there an adequate assessment of the family's need for services?	$\boxtimes$			

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Did the protective factors in this case require the LDSS to file a petition in Family Court at any time during or after the investigation?				
Were appropriate/needed services offered in this case	$\boxtimes$			
Placement Activities in Response to the Fatality In	nvestigatio	n		
	Yes	No	N/A	Unable to Determine
Did the safety factors in the case show the need for the surviving siblings/other children in the household be removed or placed in foster care at any time during this fatality investigation?		$\boxtimes$		
Were there surviving children in the household that were removed either as a result of this fatality report / investigation or for reasons unrelated to this fatality?		$\boxtimes$		
Explain as necessary:  No surviving children were removed as a result of this fatality report.				

## **Legal Activity Related to the Fatality**

Was there legal activity as a result of the fatality investigation? There was no legal activity.

## **Services Provided to the Family in Response to the Fatality**

Services	Provided After Death	Offered, but Refused	Offered, Unknown if Used	Not Offered	Needed but Unavailable	N/A	CDR Lead to Referral
Bereavement counseling	$\boxtimes$						
<b>Economic support</b>							
Funeral arrangements		$\boxtimes$					
Housing assistance			$\boxtimes$				
Mental health services							
Foster care							
Health care							
Legal services							
Family planning							
Homemaking Services							
Parenting Skills			$\boxtimes$				
<b>Domestic Violence Services</b>							
Early Intervention							
Alcohol/Substance abuse						$\boxtimes$	

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Child Care				$\boxtimes$	
Intensive case management				$\boxtimes$	
Family or others as safety resources	$\boxtimes$				
Other	$\boxtimes$				

Other, specify: Community Resources

Additional information, if necessary:

ECDSS linked the family with appropriate community resources throughout the investigation.

Were services provided to siblings or other children in the household to address any immediate needs and support their well-being in response to the fatality? Yes

#### **Explain:**

The siblings were referred to mental health counseling, schools for the SS, and grief counseling.

# Were services provided to parent(s) and other care givers to address any immediate needs related to the fatality? Yes

#### **Explain:**

The family was offered burial assistance, grief counseling, mental health counseling, financial assistance and community resources that assist immigrants adapting to United States culture as well as refer the family to medical providers and appropriate educational providers for the children.

#### **History Prior to the Fatality**

**Child Information** 

# Did the child have a history of alleged child abuse/maltreatment? Was there an open CPS case with this child at the time of death? Yes Was the child ever placed outside of the home prior to the death? No Were there any siblings ever placed outside of the home prior to this child's death? No

Was the child acutely ill during the two weeks before death?

No

#### **CPS - Investigative History Three Years Prior to the Fatality**

Date of SCR Report	Alleged Victim(s)	Alleged Perpetrator(s)	Allegation(s)	Allegation Outcome	Compliance Issue(s)
06/15/2018	Deceased Child, Male, 5 Years	1 '	Inadequate Guardianship	Unsubstantiated	No
	Deceased Child, Male, 5 Years	Mother, Female, 38 Years	Lack of Supervision	Unsubstantiated	

#### Report Summary:

An SCR report received on 06/15/18, alleged the 3-year-old male subject child left the home without supervision. The 3-year-old subject child was found several blocks away from his home. He was running, crying and had no shoes on his

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feet. The subject mother was unaware the 3-year-old left the hunknown roles.	ome. The biological father and the other children had				
Report Determination: Unfounded	<b>Date of Determination:</b> 08/28/2018				
Basis for Determination:  ECDSS completed a thorough investigation which revealed a cultural norm, and what was considered normal in their home neighbors assisting with supervision. The family did not under learned the family was involved with a community resource to culture.  OCFS Review Results:	country. ECDSS documented the family was used to rstand United States culture or local laws and ECDSS assist in familiarizing immigrants with United States				
ECDSS completed a thorough investigation. The casework wa					
Are there Required Actions related to the compliance issue	e(s)?  Yes No				
CPS - Investigative History More Tha	an Three Years Prior to the Fatality				
	<u>.</u>				
There is no known CPS history more than 3 years prior to the	•				
Known CPS Histor	y Outside of NYS				
Legal History Within Three	Years Prior to the Fatality				
Was there any legal activity within three years prior to the fatality investigation? There was no legal activity					
Additional Local D	istrict Comments				
We at the Erie County Department of Social Services apprecia advance. We find that the facts, as written, describe the unfortu- pleased that OCFS found that the fatality investigation was con- related to the fatality or to the CPS investigations conducted du	anate events and the actions taken in response. We are inducted appropriately and that there are no required actions uring the three years preceding the fatality.				
Recommende	ed Action(s)				
Are there any recommended actions for local or state admi					

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