

Preliminary Report	Fatality	03/31/2023
---------------------------	-----------------	-------------------

- 1. Victim:** Marlai Smith – 8-year-old female
- 2. Date of notification to DCS:** 9/19/20
- 3. Date of fatality:** 9/22/20
- 4. Date of determination that the fatality was the result of abuse or neglect*:** 2/8/22
- 5. County and general location of the residence of the victim:** Maricopa County – Mesa, AZ
- 6. Alleged perpetrator(s) name, age and city, town or general location:**

Chaimara Washington – age 28 – Mesa, AZ
Brandon Cooper – age 31 – Mesa, AZ

7. Circumstances of the fatality that indicate it was the result of abuse or neglect:

On September 19, 2020, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 8-year-old Marlai Smith who was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. The child was pronounced deceased on September 22, 2020. The mother, Chaimara Washington, and her significant other, Brandon Cooper, were charged with first degree murder and child abuse on February 8, 2022.

8. Whether DCS has received any reports or past cases, of child abuse, abandonment or neglect involving the child or the current alleged perpetrator(s):**

DCS received the following prior reports involving Marlai Smith and/or Chaimara Washington:

On December 16, 2018, a report was received alleging neglect to Marlai by the mother’s previous significant other. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On February 21, 2020, a report was received alleging neglect to Marlai and two of her siblings by their mother, Chaimara Washington. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed after the family was referred for services within the community.

DCS received no prior reports involving Brandon Cooper.

9. Actions taken by DCS in response to the fatality:

A joint investigation was conducted with the Mesa Police Department.

10. Actions taken regarding the child and/or other children in the home:

Following an assessment of child safety, the other children in the home were removed and placed in foster care.

11. Whether the agency is or intends to provide direct services or service referrals to the family:

The Department provided services to the family.

*The determination that a fatality or near fatality is the result of abuse, abandonment or neglect is based one or more of the following criteria: (1) The perpetrator(s) arrest related to the incident, (2) Substantiated finding(s) linking the alleged perpetrator(s) action(s) to the fatality or near fatality and/or (3) Results of the Medical Examiner's report.

** Information released after July 3, 2015 provides reports, or any current or past cases, of abuse, abandonment or neglect involving the child or the alleged perpetrator pursuant to A.R.S. § 8-807.01(A)(1)(e).
Posted information may be updated as new information becomes available.