

Preliminary Report	Fatality	09/11/2024
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Amendments to the information originally posted on 07/10/2024 are displayed below in red.

1. Victim: Damien Coats – 3-year-old male

2. Date of notification to DCS: 1/25/2023

3. Date of fatality: 1/29/2023

4. Date of determination that the fatality was the result of abuse or neglect*:

Venicia Belarde- 7/3/2024

Jillian Golden- 9/4/2024

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:

Venicia Belarde – age 21 – Mesa, AZ

Jillian Golden – age 37 – Mesa, AZ

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

On January 25, 2023, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 3-year-old Damien Coats, who was transported to the hospital when found unresponsive and stiff in the home. Medical providers administered Narcan and his symptoms temporarily improved, but he ultimately died due to fentanyl intoxication. The Department substantiated the allegation of neglect as to the mother, Venicia Belarde, who knowingly allowed the child to reside in a home with active fentanyl users and making it accessible to them. **The Department substantiated the allegation of neglect by the maternal grandmother, Jillian Golden, who failed to seek immediate medical attention for the child.**

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 report involving Venicia Belarde:

On July 10, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by the mother, Venicia Belarde, and their father. Following an assessment of child safety, the child was removed from the home and placed in a licensed foster home. A dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Supreme Court and the allegation was substantiated. The Department provided services to the family. A guardianship petition was filed for this child. The guardianship was granted and the case closed on June 15, 2018.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Jillian Golden:

On August 12, 2005, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Jillian Golden. The allegation of neglect was unsubstantiated. No services were offered to the family and the case was closed on September 29, 2005.

On March 3, 2014, a report was received alleging neglect and physical abuse to a child by their mother, Jillian Golden, and another adult. The allegations of neglect and physical abuse were unsubstantiated as to both caregivers. No services were offered to the family as they moved out of state and the case was closed on November 9, 2016.

On July 19, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Jillian Golden. The allegation of neglect was unsubstantiated. The Department provided the family with in-home services and the case was closed on October 19, 2017.

On November 6, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect toward children by their mother, Jillian Golden, and other adults. The allegations of neglect toward the caregivers were substantiated and the children were removed from the home and placed in licensed foster care. An out of home dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Supreme Court. The one child was on runaway status until aging out of the system in 2019. A guardianship petition was filed for the other child. The guardianship was granted on April 4, 2019, and the case closed on April 30, 2019.

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

A joint investigation was conducted with the Apache Junction Police Department.

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

There were no other children in the home.

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

There were no services provided by the Department.

*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.