

Preliminary Report	Fatality	04/15/2024
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- 1. Victim:** Serenity Hernandez – 8-month-old female
- 2. Date of notification to DCS:** 09/16/2023
- 3. Date of fatality:** 09/23/2023
- 4. Date of determination that the fatality was the result of abuse or neglect*:**
11/15/2023
- 5. County and general location of the residence of the victim:** Maricopa County – Avondale, AZ

6. Alleged perpetrator(s) name, age and city, town or general location:

Melissa Rocha – age 28 – Avondale, AZ

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

On September 16, 2023, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 8-month-old female, Serenity Hernandez, being found unresponsive in her home while in the care of her mother, Melissa Rocha, and her father. Serenity was taken to the hospital where she passed away on September 23, 2023; her cause of death was ascribed to complications of fentanyl intoxication. On November 15, 2023, the Maricopa County Superior Court found that the mother, Melissa Rocha, neglected 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 reports involving Melissa Rocha and Serenity Hernandez:

On December 18, 2022, a report was received alleging neglect to Serenity Hernandez by her mother, Melissa Rocha. The allegations were substantiated. Ms. Rocha was referred for services by the Department and was participating in these services when a subsequent report was received.

On March 8, 2023, a report was received alleging neglect to Serenity Hernandez by her mother, Melissa Rocha. The allegations were unsubstantiated. Ms. Rocha continued participating in previously offered services. The case was still open when the next report was received.

On March 30, 2023, a report was received alleging neglect to Serenity Hernandez by her mother, Melissa Rocha. The allegations were unsubstantiated. Ms. Rocha continued

participating in the previously offered services. Ms. Rocha successfully completed services and the case was closed on August 10, 2023.

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

A joint investigation was conducted with the Avondale 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 placed with relatives.

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

The Department is providing services to the family including services to support the other children involved.

*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.