

<b>Preliminary Report</b>	<b>Fatality</b>	<b>01/22/2025</b>
---------------------------	-----------------	-------------------

**1. Victim:** Zariah Clay – 3-month-old female

**2. Date of notification to DCS:** 09/01/2023

**3. Date of fatality:** 09/01/2023

**4. Date of determination that the fatality was the result of abuse or neglect\*:**  
01/15/2025

**5. County and general location of the residence of the victim:** Maricopa County – Phoenix, AZ

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

Joni Mitchell – age 21 – Phoenix, AZ

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

On September 1, 2023, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the death of 3-month-old Zariah Clay. Zariah was pronounced deceased after co-sleeping on an adult bed with her mother, Joni Mitchell, and her father. On November 21, 2024, the Department substantiated the allegation of neglect to the child by her mother, Joni Mitchell.

**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 Joni Mitchell and Zariah Clay:

On May 26, 2023, a report was received alleging neglect to Zariah by her mother, Joni Mitchell. The allegations were unsubstantiated. The family was provided with information on services available in the community and the case was closed.

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

A joint investigation was conducted with the Phoenix 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.