



Summary Report	Fatality	10/06/21
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1. Victim: Aaron Garza Jr – 11-month-old male

2. Was the child residing in the child's home or in an out-of-home placement at the time of the fatality?

The child was residing in his home when the following incident occurred:

On November 16, 2019, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding an 11-month-old male, Aaron Garza Jr, who was transported to the hospital after being found unresponsive at home. The child presented with multiple injuries suspected to be non-accidental trauma. The child passed away from his injuries on November 18, 2019. On July 13, 2021, the Department substantiated the allegations of physical abuse against the father, Aaron Garza Sr. On July 14, 2021, the father, Aaron Garza Sr. was charged with first-degree murder, child abuse and aggravated assault.

3. If the victim in the Preliminary Report involved a child residing in the child's home, the following information will be provided:

a. Services being provided to the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the abuse or neglect at the time of the incident and the date of the last contact before the incident between the entity providing services and the person receiving services:

There were no services being provided to the family by the Department of Child Safety at the time of the incident.

b. Was the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the abuse or neglect the subject of a report for investigation at the time of the incident?

No.

c. All involvement of the child's parents and of the person suspected of the abuse or neglect in a situation for which a report for investigation was made or in services provided pursuant to this chapter in the five years preceding the incident:

DCS received the following prior reports involving Aaron Garza Sr:

On March 17, 2019, a report was received alleging physical abuse to Aaron Garza Jr by Aaron Garza Sr. The allegations were unsubstantiated as to Aaron Garza Sr. The family was provided with information on services available in the community and the case was closed on May 14, 2019.

On June 10, 2019, a report was received alleging neglect to Aaron Garza Jr by his mother and father, Aaron Garza Sr. The allegations were unsubstantiated. The family was provided with information on services available in the community and the case was closed August 14, 2019.



d. Any investigation pursuant to a report for investigation concerning the child, a member of the child's family or the person suspected of the abuse or neglect or services provided to the child or the child's family since the date of the incident involving the fatality:

The investigation of the fatality report resulted in the sibling being placed foster care. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Graham County Superior Court on November 20, 2019 and is providing services to the family. On July 13, 2021, the allegation of physical abuse pertaining to Aaron Garza Sr. was substantiated. On July 14, 2021, the father was charged with first-degree murder, child abuse and aggravated assault. There have been no subsequent reports of abuse or neglect involving this family.

4. If the victim in the Preliminary Report involved a child residing in an out-of-home placement, the following information will be provided:

a. Licensing Agency:

N/A

b. Licensing history of the out-of-home placement, including the type of license held by the operator of the placement and the period for which the placement has been licensed:

N/A

c. Summary of all violations by the licensee:

N/A

d. Any other actions by the licensee or an employee of the licensee that constitute a substantial failure to protect and promote the health, safety and welfare of a child.

N/A

5. Actions taken by the Department in response to the case including any changes to policy or practice and/or recommendations for further changes in policies, practices, rules or statutes:

The Department conducted a joint investigation with the Graham County Sheriff's Department and Safford Police Department. The other child residing in the home was taken into DCS custody. On November 20, 2019, the Department filed a dependency petition with the Graham County Superior Court and substantiated the allegations as to Aaron Garza Sr on July 13, 2021. The father was charged with first-degree murder, child abuse and aggravated assault on July 14, 2021. Services are being provided to the family. There have been no subsequent reports received involving this family.

Additionally, in accordance with the DCS Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16), multidisciplinary team (MDT) reviews of fatality and near fatality cases were implemented during the first quarter of FY16. The MDT reviews of fatality and near fatality cases, especially those with prior DCS involvement, are a key feature of the Strategic Plan and support the objective of increasing the accuracy of safety and risk assessments in investigations.

Cases are reviewed by the MDT in order to identify any systemic factors, both internal and external to the Department that may have had an impact. The Department uses the aggregate data gathered through all of the MDT reviews to assess and guide future changes and/or



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Douglas A. Ducey, Governor

recommendations to policies, practices, rules or statutes. Findings from these reviews are compiled into an annual report to be shared on the DCS website. The target date for release of the next report is December 1, 2021.

For more information regarding the Department of Child Safety's Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2016, please visit the DCS website.