



Summary Report	Fatality	3/11/2020
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1. Victim: Michelle Thresher – 4-year-old female

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 her home when the following incident occurred:

On September 18, 2019, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 4-year-old Michelle Thresher who became unresponsive at home. Michelle was transported to the hospital where she was pronounced deceased. The Department took custody of the child's siblings and filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court on September 23, 2019. On November 4, 2019, it was determined through that proceeding that the child's mother, Allie Harris, neglected her by failing to provide appropriate supervision. The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's report completed on November 25, 2019, stated the death was caused by fentanyl toxicity.

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:

No services were 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:

The child's parents were involved in the following reports in the five years preceding the incident:

On November 9, 2016, a report was received alleging neglect to Michelle Thresher and a sibling by their mother, Allie Harris. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the family completed in-home services provided by the Department.

On July 24, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect to Michelle Thresher's half-sibling by her father and that child's mother. The Department offered services to the father and the report was substantiated.



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 removal of the victim's siblings from the home. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and services are being provided to the family. One of the siblings was later assessed as safe in the care of their other parent. No subsequent reports of abuse or neglect have been received.

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 Glendale Police Department. Following an assessment of child safety, the victim's siblings were removed and placed in foster care. A dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and services are being provided. One of the siblings was later assessed as safe in the care of their other parent. No subsequent reports have been received.

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 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, 2020.



ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT
of CHILD SAFETY

Mike Faust, Director
Douglas A. Ducey, Governor

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