



Summary Report	Fatality	1/18/18
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1. **Victim:** Sanaa Cunningham – 7-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 February 12, 2017, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 7-year-old Sanaa Cunningham who was transported to a hospital where she was pronounced deceased. Sanaa was observed to have multiple injuries and the report indicated a physician stated the death was suspicious. An autopsy completed by the Maricopa Office of the Medical Examiner on October 12, 2017 found the cause of death to be complications of sepsis in the setting of acute bronchitis with bronchiolitis and early bronchopneumonia, right foot abscess, multiple skin ulcerations, and unspecified schizophrenia spectrum disorder. The manner of death was ruled as undetermined. It was also found to be unknown as to how the injury occurred. On December 1, 2017, a Maricopa County Grand Jury indicted the child's father, Germayne Cunningham, and stepmother, Lisa Cunningham, on charges of first degree murder and child abuse.

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 through the Department at the time of the incident. However, the Department received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to Sanaa by Germayne Cunningham and neglect to Sanaa by Lisa Cunningham on December 21, 2016. An investigation was in progress and the last date of contact between DCS and the family was on January 11, 2017.

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?

The child and her father, Germayne Cunningham, and stepmother, Lisa Cunningham, were subjects of the December 21, 2016 report.

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 father, Germayne Cunningham, and stepmother, Lisa Cunningham, were involved in the following:

On March 4, 2016, a report was received alleging neglect to Sanaa by Germayne and Lisa Cunningham. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed. The family was provided with information on services available in the community.

On October 27, 2016, a report was received alleging sexual abuse to Sanaa by an unknown perpetrator. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case remained open pending the



completion of all documentation when another report was received. The family was offered but declined services through the Department.

On December 21, 2016, a report was received alleging neglect and physical abuse to Sanaa by Germaine Cunningham and neglect to Sanaa by Lisa Cunningham. An investigation was initiated and still in progress when the fatality report was received. The allegations have been proposed for substantiation.

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 criminal investigation of the fatality report resulted in the child's father and stepmother, Germaine and Lisa Cunningham, being indicted on charges of first degree murder and child abuse. The other children in the home were initially assessed as safe with a safety plan in place. The Department continued to monitor and assess their safety and later removed three of the children from the home. A fourth child in the home was assessed as safe in the care of that child's other parent. Later, one of the children removed from the home was reunified with that child's other parent. The Department has filed dependency petitions with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and is providing services to the family.

Since the fatality report, DCS has received five subsequent reports alleging abuse and/or neglect to half-siblings of the victim. Germaine and Lisa Cunningham were alleged to be the perpetrators in two of the reports and another caregiver was alleged to be the perpetrator in the other three. Each report has been investigated and all of the allegations have been unsubstantiated.

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 Goodyear Police Department. The child's father and stepmother, Germaine and Lisa Cunningham, were indicted on charges of child abuse and first degree murder. The Department initially assessed the other children in the home as safe under a safety plan, but later placed them in foster care. Another child was assessed as safe in the



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Director

care of that child's other parent and another child has since been reunified with that child's other parent. The Department filed dependency petitions with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and is providing services to the 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.

This case was 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 is using 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 will be compiled into an annual report to be shared on the DCS website. The target date for release of this report is December 1, 2018.

For more information regarding the Department of Child Safety's Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2016, please visit the DCS website at: <https://dcs.az.gov/news/dcs-strategic-plan>.