



<b>Summary Report</b>	<b>Fatality</b>	<b>10/13/16</b>
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**1. Victim:** Adalynn Russell – 22-month-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 April 4, 2016, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding Adalynn being found deceased in her home. It was reported that the mother, Natalie Russell, left her methadone medication within reach of Adalynn and that Adalynn ingested some of the methadone. Upon examination, the child was found to have toxic levels of methadone and methamphetamines in her system. Adalynn's death has been ruled a homicide. Natalie Russell was arrested and charged with first degree murder.

**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 following reports involve Natalie Russell and/or Adalynn Russell's father:

On July 7, 2011, a report was received alleging neglect to one of Adalynn's older siblings by their mother, Natalie Russell. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The Department offered services to the family and the case was closed.

On December 3, 2014, a report was received alleging neglect to Adalynn and one of her older siblings by their mother, Natalie Russell and each of their fathers. The children were removed from the home and the Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. The allegations were substantiated. The Department was providing services to the family when the following three subsequent reports were received.

On January 7, 2015, a report was received alleging neglect to Adalynn and a sibling by their mother, Natalie Russell, Adalynn's father and the kinship placement provider. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the Department continued providing services to the family.



On August 8, 2015, a report was received alleging neglect to a sibling by the mother, Natalie Russell and the father. The Department filed an in-home dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court as to the sibling. The allegations were substantiated as to the father and unsubstantiated as to mother, Natalie Russell. The Department continued providing services to the family.

On February 4, 2016, a report was received alleging neglect to Adalynn by her mother, Natalie Russell. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

**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 found the siblings in the home to be unsafe. The siblings were removed and placed in foster care. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. Natalie Russell has been charged with first degree murder regarding the death of Adalynn Russell.

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 Phoenix Police Department. Natalie Russell has been charged with first degree murder regarding the death of Adalynn Russell. Following an assessment of child safety, the siblings were found to be unsafe and removed from the home. The Department filed a dependency petition 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



## *Arizona Department of Child Safety*

**Douglas A. Ducey**  
Governor

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Director

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, 2017.

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>.