

Summary Report	Fatality	05/21/2024
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1. Victim: Brayden Butcher – 8-year-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 August 12, 2022, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 8-year-old Brayden Butcher who was brought to an emergency center and lost consciousness while in the waiting room. He was transported to a hospital where he was ultimately pronounced deceased. Upon examination, multiple injuries were discovered including fractures. On April 24, 2024, the parents, Joshua A. Butcher and Mercedes M. Caho, were each indicted on one count of first-degree murder and four counts of child abuse in relation to Brayden's death.

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:

Although no services were being provided to the family prior to fatality incident on August 12, 2022, the family was being investigated for an open report dated May 10, 2022. The last date of contact between the Department and the family was on May 12, 2022.

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?

Ms. Caho, Mr. Butcher, Brayden Butcher and his siblings were subjects of the May 10, 2022, 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:

DCS received the following prior reports involving Ms. Caho, Mr. Butcher and/or Brayden Butcher:

On February 9, 2012, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by Ms. Caho. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The family declined daycare assistance and the case was closed on May 9, 2013.

On December 15, 2018, a report was received alleging neglect to Brayden and a sibling by Ms. Caho and Mr. Butcher. The allegations were unsubstantiated. There were no services provided and the case was closed on April 2, 2019.

On November 26, 2019, a report was received alleging neglect to Brayden by Ms. Caho and Mr. Butcher. The allegations were unsubstantiated. There were no services provided and the case was closed on December 13, 2019.

On April 30, 2020, a report was received alleging neglect to Brayden and his siblings by Ms. Caho, another adult and Mr. Butcher. The investigation resulted in the children coming into DCS custody. A dependency petition was filed in Pima County Superior Court. Services were provided to the family. The allegations as to the parents were substantiated. The parents successfully reunified with the children and the dependency was dismissed in September 2021. The case was closed on October 12, 2021.

On February 16, 2022, a report was received alleging neglect to Brayden and his siblings by Mr. Butcher. The allegations were unsubstantiated. There were no services provided and the case was closed on March 11, 2022.

On May 10, 2022, a report was received alleging neglect to Brayden and his siblings by Ms. Caho and Mr. Butcher. The investigation was pending investigation when the fatality occurred. DCS took custody of the children and the dependency matter is ongoing.

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 both Ms. Caho and Mr. Butcher being indicted one count of first-degree murder and four counts of child abuse. The siblings have been placed with a relative and the Department filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Juvenile Court. Services are being provided to the family.

Information obtained during the investigation resulted in a subsequent report involving the parents, Brayden and his siblings alleging neglect that occurred prior to the fatality incident. The siblings were already in DCS custody when the report was made. The dependency matter is ongoing and services are being provided to the 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 Pima County Sheriff's Office. Ms. Caho and Mr. Butcher were indicted one count of first-degree murder and four counts of child abuse in relation to Brayden's death. The siblings were placed with a relative and a dependency petition was filed with the Pima County Juvenile Court. Information obtained during the investigation resulted in a subsequent report involving the parents, Brayden and his siblings alleging neglect that occurred prior to the fatality incident. The siblings were already in DCS custody when the report was made. The dependency matter is ongoing and services are being provided 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 fatality and near fatality cases with prior DCS involvement, which are a key feature of the Strategic Plan and supports 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, 2024.