

Summary Report	Fatality	12/15/2023
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1. Victim: Dominic Nunez- four-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 June 24, 2021, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding four-year-old, Dominic Nunez, who was hospitalized and found to have suffered multiple non-accidental injuries. Dominic was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury on May 22, 2021, while in the care of his aunt, Jessica Nunez, in El Paso, TX. He was transported to a hospital in Tucson, AZ on June 24, 2021, where he was treated and later released to a medically assisted home. On October 17, 2021 Dominic passed away. It was determined that Dominic's cause of death is ascribed to blunt force injuries. On August 18, 2023, the Department substantiated the allegation of physical abuse to Dominic by his aunt, Jessica Nunez.

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 the child, Dominic Nunez and his parents:

On January 17, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect to Dominic by his mother and father. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The family was provided with information on services available in the community and the case was closed.

On July 13, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect to Dominic and his siblings by their mothers, father, and another adult. Following an assessment of child safety, the children were removed and a dependency petition was filed with the Pima County Juvenile Court. The allegations as to the other adult were unsubstantiated. The allegations of neglect as to the children's mother and father were substantiated. The Department provided services to the family. The children were returned to their mother's care in April 2019 when the dependency was dismissed and the case was closed.

DCS received the following prior reports involving the perpetrator, Jessica Nunez:

On June 13, 2011, a report was received alleging neglect to children by their mother, Jessica Nunez. The allegations were unsubstantiated. The family was provided with information on services available in the community and the case was closed.

On March 30, 2012, a report was received alleging neglect to children by their mother, Jessica Nunez. The allegations were unsubstantiated. The investigation was still open when another report was received.

On September 5, 2012, a report was received alleging neglect and physical abuse to children by their mother, Jessica Nunez, and another adult. Following an assessment of child safety, the children were removed from the home and a dependency petition was filed with the Pima County Juvenile Court. The Department provided services to the family and the allegations were substantiated. Jessica's parental rights were terminated to the children on July 18, 2015 and the case was closed.

On February 26, 2014, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Jessica Nunez. The child was removed and added to the existing dependency for the mother's older children with Pima County Juvenile Court. Jessica's parental rights were terminated to the child on November 30, 2015 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 resulted in Dominic's sibling being removed from the home. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Superior Court on June 30, 2021 and provided services to the family. The allegations of physical abuse by the aunt, Jessica Nunez, were substantiated. The sibling was returned to their parents' care in September 2022 when the court dismissed the dependency. There were no subsequent reports of abuse or neglect received regarding 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 El Paso Police Department. The Department removed Dominic's sibling from the home and filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Juvenile Court on June 30, 2021. The allegations of physical abuse by the aunt, Jessica Nunez, were substantiated. The Department provided services to the family. The sibling was returned to the parents' care in September 2022 when the court dismissed the dependency. There were no subsequent reports of abuse or neglect received regarding 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, 2023.