



Summary Report	Fatality	03/31/2023
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1. Victim: Marlai Smith – 8-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 19, 2020, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 8-year-old Marlai Smith who was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. The child was pronounced deceased on September 22, 2020. The mother, Chaimara Washington, and her significant other, Brandon Cooper, were charged with first degree murder and child abuse on February 8, 2022.

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 Marlai Smith and/or Chaimara Washington:

On December 16, 2018, a report was received alleging neglect to Marlai by an adult in the home. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On February 21, 2020, a report was received alleging neglect to Marlai and two of her siblings by their mother, Chaimara Washington. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed after the family was referred for services within the community.

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 other children in the home being removed and placed in foster care. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Superior Court and provided services to the family. The children were reunified with their fathers. The mother, Chaimara Washington, and her significant other, Brandon Cooper, were charged with first degree murder and child abuse on February 8, 2022. A subsequent report involving a sibling was received on October 18, 2021, regarding allegations of neglect by the child's father. The Department was unable to locate the family and the case was closed.

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 Mesa Police Department. The other children in the home were removed and placed in foster care. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Superior Court and provided services to the family. The children were reunified with their fathers. The mother, Chaimara Washington, and her significant other, Brandon Cooper, were charged with first degree murder and child abuse on February 8, 2022. A subsequent report involving a sibling was received on October 18, 2021, regarding allegations of neglect by the child's father. The Department was unable to locate the family and the case was closed.

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.