

Summary Report	Near Fatality	07/03/2024
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Amendments to the information originally posted on 5/13/2024 are displayed below in red.

1. Victim: 4-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 near fatality?

The child was residing in his home when the following incident occurred:

On March 30, 2024, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding a 4-year-old child who was taken to the hospital after sustaining an accidental gunshot wound to the chest. Upon examination, the child was determined to be in serious condition. On March 27, 2024, Laquasha Sebastian was indicted by a Maricopa County grand jury with one count of child abuse. **On March 28, 2024, the Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Superior Court. On June 4, 2024, the court found the child dependent as to the father, Kevin Rhymes.**

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 report involving Laquasha Sebastian and the near fatality victim:

On May 1, 2023, a report was received alleging neglect to the near fatality victim by his father, **Kevin Rhymes**, and significant other, Laquasha Sebastian. The allegations of neglect were unsubstantiated as to both caregivers. No services were offered to the family and the case was closed on May 26, 2023.

DCS received the following prior reports involving the near fatality victim and his parents:

On January 20, 2016, a report was received alleging neglect toward children by father, **Kevin Rhymes**, and another adult. The allegations of neglect were unsubstantiated as to both caregivers. No services were offered to the family and the case was closed.

On July 14, 2017, a report was received alleging neglect toward children by father, **Kevin Rhymes**, and another adult. The allegations of neglect were substantiated and a dependency petition was filed. The Department provided the family with reunification services. The children were returned back to the other adult and the dependency case closed in June 2018.

On July 13, 2018, a report was received alleging physical abuse to a child by father, **Kevin Rhymes**. The allegations of physical abuse were unsubstantiated. No services were offered and the case was closed on July 31, 2018.

On December 31, 2018, a report was received alleging neglect towards a child by father, **Kevin Rhymes**, and another adult. The allegations of neglect were substantiated against the father, **Kevin Rhymes**. The child was assessed as safe with their parent. A list of community resources was offered to the family and the case was closed on March 15, 2019.

On June 15, 2020, a report was received alleging neglect and physical abuse towards a child by father, **Kevin Rhymes**. The allegations of neglect and physical abuse were unsubstantiated. No services were offered to the family and the case closed out on September 27, 2020.

On October 16, 2021, a report was received alleging neglect to the near fatality victim and sibling against their mother. The allegations of neglect were unsubstantiated to the mother. Daycare services were provided to the family and the case was closed on November 23, 2021.

On December 20, 2021, a report was received alleging neglect to the near fatality victim and sibling against their parents. The allegation of neglect was substantiated to the mother. The children were taken into DCS custody and an out of home dependency petition was filed. On March 28, 2022, the near fatality victim was assessed as safe with his father, **Kevin Rhymes**, and the dependency was dismissed.

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 near fatality:

The investigation of the near fatality report resulted in the other child in the home being assessed as safe with their mother. Upon release from the hospital, the near fatality victim was removed from the home and placed with a relative. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court for the near fatality victim and is providing

services to the family. On March 27, 2024, Laquasha Sebastian was indicted by a Maricopa County grand jury with one count of child abuse. **On June 4, 2024, the court found the child dependent as to the father, Kevin Rhymes.**

A subsequent report involving a sibling of the near fatality victim was received on May 20, 2024, alleging neglect of the child by the child's mother and father, Kevin Rhymes. The investigation is ongoing.

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 contacted a joint investigation with the Glendale Police Department. Upon release from the hospital, the near fatality victim was removed from the home and placed with a relative. The other child in the home was assessed as safe with their mother. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court for the near fatality victim and is providing services to the family. On March 27, 2024, Laquasha Sebastian was indicted by a Maricopa County grand jury with one count of child abuse. **On June 4, 2024, the court found the child dependent as to the father, Kevin Rhymes.**

A subsequent report involving a sibling of the near fatality victim was received on May 20, 2024, alleging neglect to the child by the child's mother and father, Kevin Rhymes. The investigation is ongoing.

The Department reminds all caregivers to practice firearm safety and always store all firearms unloaded, in a secure locked location.

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.