

Summary Report	Near Fatality	12/12/2024
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1. Victim: 7-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 July 1, 2024, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding a 7-year-old male child and their sibling, who had been involved in a wrong way motor vehicle crash and were not properly restrained. Upon examination, the child was found to be in serious condition, having sustained facial fractures and trauma to his lungs. The near-fatality victim and their sibling were in the care of their mother, Veronica Leon, when the accident occurred. On August 5, 2024, Veronica Leon was indicted on multiple charges including child abuse, endangerment and aggravated driving while under the influence of liquor. On November 22, 2024, Veronica Leon pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated driving while under the influence of liquor, two counts of endangerment, and one count of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

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:

The child's mother, Veronica Leon, was involved in the following prior reports:

On August 13, 2020, the Department of Child Safety received a report alleging neglect to the near-fatality victim and their sibling by another adult and their

mother, Veronica Leon. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The mother declined voluntary in-home services offered by the Department and the case was closed on September 16, 2020.

On December 1, 2020, the Department of Child Safety received a report alleging neglect to the near-fatality victim and their sibling by another adult and their mother, Veronica Leon. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The Department referred the family to voluntary in-home services and the DCS investigation was closed on January 7, 2021.

On February 23, 2021, the Department of Child Safety received a report alleging neglect to the near-fatality victim and their sibling by another adult and their mother, Veronica Leon. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The family was still receiving in-home services at the time of this report. The Department recommended the parents to continue with these services and the case was closed on April 5, 2021.

On March 20, 2021, the Department of Child Safety received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to the near-fatality victim and their sibling by another adult and their mother, Veronica Leon. The allegation of neglect was substantiated and the children were removed from the home. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Superior Court and provided services to the family.

On November 5, 2021, the Department of Child Safety received a report alleging neglect to the near-fatality victim and their sibling by their mother, Veronica Leon. The allegation of neglect was substantiated. A subsequent report was received prior to the closure of this investigation.

On January 13, 2022, the Department of Child Safety received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to the near-fatality victim and their sibling by another adult and their mother, Veronica Leon. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the family was still receiving services through their ongoing Dependency with the Department. The near-fatality victim and their sibling were returned to their mother's care and the case was dismissed on October 14, 2022.

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 resulted in the child's mother, Veronica Leon, being indicted on multiple charges of child abuse, aggravated DUI, and endangerment. Upon release from the hospital, the near-fatality victim and their sibling were assessed as safe in the care of their other parent. The Department provided the family with information on services available in the community. No subsequent reports of abuse or neglect were 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 Pima County Sheriff's Office. The children's mother, Veronica Leon, was indicted on multiple charges including child abuse, aggravated DUI, and endangerment. On November 22, 2024, Veronica Leon pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated driving while under the influence of liquor, two counts of endangerment, and one count of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. Upon release from the hospital, the near-fatality victim and their sibling were assessed as safe in the care of their other parent. The Department provided the family with information on services available in the community. No subsequent reports of abuse or neglect were received regarding the family.

The Department reminds all caregivers to always properly restrain children in vehicles.

For additional information please visit the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Office of Injury Prevention: A Safe Ride home at:
<http://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/injury-prevention/index.php#safe-ride-home>

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 January 1, 2025.