



Summary Report	Fatality	11/25/15
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1. Victim: Alexandra Tercerro – 3-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 May 23, 2015, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 3-year-old Alexandra Tercerro who had been brought to the hospital and pronounced deceased. Alexandra was observed to have multiple lacerations and bruises all over her body. She was also severely underweight and very malnourished. Alexandra's parents, Rosemary Velazco and Carlos Tercerro Cruz, have been arrested for child abuse.

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:

The Department was providing services to the child's parents, Rosemary Velazco and Carlos Tercerro Cruz, and a sibling who was the subject of a June 27, 2014 report regarding a substance-exposed newborn. The report resulted in the Department filing an out-of-home dependency petition on the sibling. Services included supervised visitation and substance abuse counseling with oversight from the Department and the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. The date of the last contact with the family prior to the fatality was on May 11, 2015 during a supervised visit between Rosemary Velazco and the sibling at the DCS office.

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?

Rosemary Velazco, Carlos Tercerro Cruz, and a newborn sibling were subjects of the June 27, 2014 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:

The child's parents, Rosemary Velazco and Carlos Tercerro Cruz, were involved in the following:

On May 31, 2011, a report was received alleging neglect to Alexandra when she and her mother tested positive for amphetamines at the birth. Alexandra and an older sibling were removed from the home and a dependency petition was filed. The parents successfully completed substance abuse treatment, parent aide, and family reunification services and were reunified with the children on April 9, 2012. The dependency was dismissed by the Maricopa County Juvenile Court on June 18, 2012 and DCS closed the case on July 10, 2012. The allegations were substantiated.



On June 27, 2014, a report was received alleging neglect to a sibling born substance-exposed to methamphetamine. Although Alexandra Tercerro was not listed as a victim in that report, attempts were made to assess her safety as well as the safety of an older sibling. The Department served the parents, Rosemary Velazco and Carlos Tercerro Cruz, with a temporary custody notice as to the newborn along with Alexandra and the older sibling. However, the parents both stated that Alexandra and the older sibling were with a relative in Mexico. DCS submitted a dependency request to the Attorney General's Office, but was advised against including Alexandra and the older sibling due to a lack of jurisdiction. Therefore temporary custody for them was allowed to expire and the dependency petition was filed only for the newborn sibling. The newborn was placed in foster care and the dependency case proceeded with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. The Department was providing services and the allegations were substantiated. The parents refused to provide an address for the children despite being ordered to do so by the Juvenile Court on July 14, 2014. It is now known that the parents were deliberately hiding the children from the Department in order to avoid losing custody. The case remained open when the fatality occurred.

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 into the fatality resulted in the arrests of the child's parents, Rosemary Velazco and Carlos Tercerro Cruz. During the Department's investigation, the parents each admitted that Alexandra and her older sibling were never in Mexico and they were deliberately hiding them in order to avoid DCS taking custody. The parents admitted other extended family members were aware that Alexandra and the older sibling were in their care and not in Mexico. One relative admitted knowing Alexandra and her older sibling were with the parents although the newborn was placed in DCS custody. She stated the mother told her not to say anything to DCS and said she was scared to tell anyone. This same relative stated she used to visit the home in 2012 and was told by the mother not to answer the door when the parents would leave her to watch the children. The parents also stated they did not seek medical care for the children or enroll them in school in order to hide them from DCS. It was also found that Alexandra's father was held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement for being in the U.S. illegally and had removal proceedings against him in 2012. However, he was released after three weeks when he posted bond.

The older sibling was removed and placed in a licensed foster home. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and services are being provided to the children. The allegations have been substantiated and the parents are encouraged to participate in services while incarcerated.

A subsequent report involving the older sibling was received on June 9, 2015 regarding allegations of abuse or neglect that occurred prior to the child coming into care. The investigation is ongoing.

An additional subsequent report alleging neglect to a newborn sibling was received on October 16, 2015. DCS placed the newborn in a licensed foster home and filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court.

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 placed the victim's older sibling in a licensed foster home and filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court. Services are being provided to support this child and the victim's younger sibling who was previously taken into custody after the June 27, 2014 report. The allegations in the fatality report have been substantiated and the parents are encouraged to participate in services while incarcerated.

On June 29, 2015, a communication was sent to all DCS staff reinforcing the use of the Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI) as a resource for additional assistance when it appears a child is missing, unsafe, or information about the child's whereabouts is being withheld.

Efforts to ensure the free exchange of information regarding child safety issues involving minors believed to possibly be in Mexico were already underway when this fatality occurred. These efforts led to the Department's first ever Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Mexican Consulate which was signed by Governor Ducey on June 19, 2015.

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 of fatality and near fatality cases, especially those with prior DCS involvement, are a key feature of the Strategic Plan and support the objective of increasing the accuracy of safety and risk assessments in investigations.

This case was 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 is using 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 will be compiled into an annual report to be shared on the DCS website. The target date for release of this report is September 1, 2016.

For more information regarding the Department of Child Safety's Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2016, please visit the DCS website at: <https://dcs.az.gov/news/dcs-strategic-plan>