



<b>Summary Report</b>	<b>Fatality</b>	<b>2/25/16</b>
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**1. Victim:** Ezekial Castro – 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 fatality?**

The child was in the hospital when the following incident occurred:

On November 2, 2015, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding four-year-old Ezekial Castro who had been admitted to the hospital on October 23, 2015 for vomiting, diarrhea, and elevated levels of sodium in his system. The child remained in the hospital and was stabilized when his sodium levels spiked again on November 2, 2015 causing multiple brain bleeds. The child did not survive and was pronounced deceased on November 5, 2015. On November 16, 2015, the child's mother, Ashley Castro, was charged by a Pima County grand jury with child abuse and first degree murder.

**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:**

No services were 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, Ashley Castro, was involved in the following:

On August 18, 2011, a report was received alleging neglect to Ezekial Castro by his mother, Ashley Castro, due to concerns regarding her ability to properly care for and meet his needs. The investigation assessed Ezekial as being safe with his parents and the allegation was unsubstantiated. The case was closed on January 11, 2012.

On April 22, 2013, a new report was received alleging neglect to Ezekial by his mother, Ashley Castro, due to concerns about his care. The investigation found the family was already receiving services to assist them in caring for Ezekial and it was determined no further intervention through DCS was needed. The case was closed on June 17, 2014.

**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 child's mother, Ashley Castro, being charged by a Pima County grand jury with child abuse and first degree murder. Following an assessment of child safety, the other children in the home were removed and placed with relatives. The Department filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Juvenile Court and services are being provided to the family. No subsequent reports of abuse or neglect have been received.

**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 Tucson Police Department. Ashley Castro was indicted by a Pima County grand jury on charges of child abuse and first degree murder. The Department placed the other children in the home with relatives and filed a dependency petition with the Pima County Juvenile Court. The Department is providing services to 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 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>.