



## Statement on the death of Donovan Lanser

**Issue Date: November 7, 2019**

On September 3, 2018, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the drowning death of a five-year-old boy, Donovan Lanser.

Donovan was found dead in his home's bathtub.

A DCS investigation determined his mother, Rebecca Savage, had left Donovan unattended for an extended period of time in the bathtub which led to his death.

DCS removed the other children from the home and placed them in a licensed foster home.

After the children were removed, the Department received a report on September 5, 2018, alleging Ms. Savage neglected and physically abused Donovan and his siblings by locking them in their rooms without food or water for extended periods of time and failing to provide medical care when the children were sick or injured. The alleged abuse occurred prior to DCS receiving Donovan's fatality report. The physical abuse allegation was substantiated and the children remained in foster care.

The Department filed a dependency petition on September 7, 2018.

On December 7, 2018, the Navajo County Juvenile Court ruled that Ms. Savage neglected Donovan when she left him alone in the bathtub where he drowned. Donovan was prone to seizures, had a seizure the day prior to the drowning, and was not receiving medication.

The DCS has the following history with the family:

On November 11, 2009, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Savage physically abused and neglected Donovan's siblings. According to the report, one of the children had bruises on their back and the children were often left with inappropriate caregivers. The family could not be located and the case was closed.

On May 20, 2013, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Savage neglected her newborn baby by using illegal drugs during her pregnancy. According to the report, Ms. Savage tested positive for methamphetamines and amphetamines while pregnant and at birth. However, the baby's urine and meconium drug screen was negative. The mother had appropriate family and financial supports for the baby. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On January 22, 2018, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Savage neglected her newborn baby by using illegal drugs during her pregnancy. Both Ms. Savage and the newborn child tested positive

Recipient Name

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for amphetamines. During the investigation, DCS confirmed that Ms. Savage had arranged a private adoption for the newborn to a family that lived in another state. The Department provided in-home services to the family. The allegation was substantiated and the case was closed after the family completed in-home services.