



Statement on the death of Johnathon Horton, Jr.

Issue Date: June 19, 2019

On January 6, 2018, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the death of a 20-month-old boy, Johnathon Horton Jr.

Earlier that day, Johnathon was transported to a hospital in Maricopa County where he was pronounced deceased.

DCS immediately took custody of the child's siblings and placed them in foster care.

The Maricopa County Office of the Medical Examiner determined on July 20, 2018, that Johnathon died due to acute methadone toxicity from ingesting methadone.

On February 5, 2019, the Maricopa County Juvenile Court ruled that the child's parents, Christina Burdette and Johnathon Horton, neglected Johnathon Jr. by failing to properly supervise him, which led to the child's death.

The Department is currently providing services to the family.

Several months after taking custody of the mother's other children, the Department was ordered by the juvenile court to place a half-sibling into the home of that child's father under the stipulation that there be no unsupervised contact between the child and the father.

The Department then received the following reports concerning the half-sibling:

On May 4, 2018, the Department received a report alleging sexual abuse to Johnathon Jr.'s half-sibling by that child's father. The DCS investigation determined that all visits between the child and the father had been supervised. The sexual abuse allegation was reported to law enforcement.

On May 17, 2018, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Johnathon Jr.'s half-sibling by that child's father and another adult. The report alleged the child witnessed a domestic dispute between the father and the other adult.

On May 29, 2018, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Johnathon Jr.'s half-sibling by that child's father and another adult. The report alleged the child witnessed domestic violence incidents in the home. The report also alleged physical abuse to the child by the other adult.

Recipient Name

Page 2

On June 4, 2018, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Johnathon Jr.'s half-sibling by that child's father. The report alleged mental health and domestic violence issues in the home.

On August 10, 2018, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Johnathon Jr.'s half-sibling by that child's father and another adult. The report alleged that the child witnessed a domestic violence incident between the father and the other adult.

During the DCS investigation into these allegations, the child was interviewed on-separate occasions and never disclosed any type of abuse, neglect, domestic violence or substance abuse in the father's home. The child was reportedly never left alone with the father, according to the DCS interviews. The child did not have any observable bruises or marks that could indicate physical abuse.

The DCS investigations and the law enforcement investigation into sexual abuse could not find evidence to support the allegations. All of the allegations were unsubstantiated and the investigations were closed.

The father was ultimately granted sole custody of the child by a juvenile court judge with the mother being allowed supervised visitation. The dependency matter as to the child was dismissed by the court on November 9, 2018.

On November 20, 2018, the Department received a report as to the child alleging neglect by Ms. Burdette. The report alleged Ms. Burdette's mental health issues prevented her from properly caring for the child. This report was received after a juvenile court judge dismissed the dependency case against the parents. The allegations were investigated and substantiated as to Ms. Burdette. However, Ms. Burdette absconded with the child before DCS could take custody. The Department and multiple law enforcement agencies are currently looking for Ms. Burdette and the child. If you have information on the whereabouts of Ms. Burdette and the child, please call the DCS hotline at 888-767-2445.

DCS has the following history with the family prior to Johnathan Horton Jr. being born on May 5, 2016:

On August 23, 2013, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Burdette neglected one of her children. According to the report, the child was being neglected due to ongoing mental health and domestic violence issues in the home. While the Department was investigating and working with the family, a subsequent report was received.

On April 16, 2014, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Burdette neglected an unidentified child living in the mother's home by allowing that child to roam around outside unsupervised. The investigation assessed the children in the home as safe and the allegations for both reports were unsubstantiated. The case was pending supervisor review for closure when two additional reports were received.

On February 11, 2015, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Burdette and Mr. Horton neglected their newborn child. According to the report, Ms. Burdette and Mr. Horton were not providing adequate care and housing for the newborn. An investigation was in progress when a second report was received on May 10, 2015 alleging neglect to the child by Mr. Horton. According to the report, Mr. Horton engaged in a domestic violence dispute in front of the child. The joint police and DCS investigation could not find evidence to support this allegation and both reports were unsubstantiated.

Recipient Name

Page 3

Ms. Burdette and Mr. Horton denied all of the allegations against them. The DCS investigation could not find enough evidence to justify removing the children from the home. The family did receive in-home family preservation services from the Department and the case was closed on September 24, 2015.