

## **Statement on the death of a three-month-old girl**

**Date Issued: November 3, 2020**

On August 5, 2018, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the death of a three-month-old girl, Marlee Rivera-Boykin.

Marlee was found unresponsive after being placed in an unsafe sleep environment in her home. She was taken to the hospital where she was pronounced deceased.

According to the report, Marlee's mother, Stephany Rivera, placed Marlee on the sofa where the child became wedged between two sofa cushions. In addition, the investigation determined Ms. Rivera was found to be under the influence of alcohol and marijuana at the time of the incident.

DCS substantiated the neglect allegation against Ms. Rivera on June 1, 2020.

At the time of Marlee's death, Ms. Rivera was receiving DCS in-home services, and DCS was in the process of transitioning her oldest child back into Ms. Rivera's home.

After the August 5 report, DCS stopped the transition process and the sibling continued living with the child's relative placement.

DCS jointly investigated with the Surprise Police Department. Ms. Rivera was not criminally charged in Marlee's death.

On March 13, 2020, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Rivera neglected her newborn child. The report alleged Ms. Rivera tested positive for marijuana and amphetamines after giving birth to a child. The newborn tested positive for marijuana. The Department removed the newborn and placed the child in foster care.

DCS is currently providing services to the family.

The Department has the following history with the family:

On September 20, 2017, the Department received a report received alleging Marlee's sibling was neglected by the father and Ms. Rivera. The report alleged the parent exposed the child to domestic violence and substance use. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegations. The child was removed from the home and placed with a relative. A dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Juvenile Court and the allegations were substantiated. The Department was providing services to the family when it received another report.

On May 5, 2018, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Rivera neglected Marlee. The report alleged Ms. Rivera tested positive for marijuana and amphetamines early in her pregnancy with Marlee. Ms. Rivera tested negative for illicit substances at the time of

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Marlee's birth. When this report was received, Ms. Rivera was participating in reunification services for her older child. She was successfully progressing through services and was close to reunifying with her child. Marlee was assessed as safe to remain living with Ms. Rivera while receiving DCS in-home services. The case remained open as the Department continued to provide services to the family when the fatality report was received on August 5, 2018.