

Statement on the death of a five-month-old boy

Date Issued: September 23, 2020

On March 16, 2019, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the death of a five-month-old boy, Mateo Rodriguez.

Mateo was unresponsive when he arrived at the hospital and was pronounced deceased. The autopsy determined methamphetamine exposure contributed to Mateo's death.

DCS immediately removed the other children living in the home and placed them with relatives.

On January 29, 2020, the Department substantiated the neglect allegations against Mateo's father, Steve Negreros. On February 21, 2020, the Department substantiated the neglect allegations against Mateo's mother, Leslie Rodriguez.

The Department is currently providing services to the family.

DCS has the following prior reports involving Mateo, Steve Negreros, and/or Leslie Rodriguez:

On August 17, 2013, the Department received a report alleging Mr. Negreros and Ms. Rodriguez physically abused and neglected one of Mateo's siblings. The report alleged Ms. Rodriguez hit the child with a metal belt that caused the child to bleed. The report also alleged the child was forced to sleep in the garage and did not have adequate food. The DCS investigation did not find enough evidence to support the allegations. The child did not have any bruises or marks. The child denied being abused or neglected. The housing met the child's needs and there was adequate food in the home. The family was offered community services and daycare. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On March 1, 2017, the Department received a report alleging Mr. Negreros and Ms. Rodriguez physically abused and neglected two of Mateo's siblings. The report alleged Ms. Rodriguez hit one of the children in the eye, causing it to bruise. The report also alleged, the family lacked appropriate housing for the children.

While DCS was investigating this report, the Department received a report on March 7, 2017, alleging Ms. Rodriguez physically abused and neglected one of Mateo's siblings. The report alleged one of the children was frequently seen with bruises and scratches. During the investigation, the DCS investigator did not observe any bruises or injuries on the child that were alleged in the report. The children had appropriate housing, and they appeared healthy and well-cared for. There was not enough evidence to support the allegations. The family was referred to counseling services and provided with community resources. The March 1 and the March 7 allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

Recipient Name

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On June 7, 2017, the Department received a report alleging Mr. Negreros and Ms. Rodriguez neglected two of Mateo's siblings. The report alleged the children were exposed to illicit drug use in the home and were not being properly fed or cared for. When DCS arrived at the family's apartment, the apartment was unoccupied and there was a recent eviction notice on the door. DCS made several attempts over the next two months to contact the family through searching public records, calling last known phone numbers and visiting alleged home addresses. Those efforts were unsuccessful. The Department determined in August 2017 that the family could not be located and the case was closed.

On March 19, 2018, the Department received a report alleging Mr. Negreros and Ms. Rodriguez physically abused and neglected Mateo's siblings. The report alleged Ms. Rodriguez unsuccessfully attempted to crash the family car with the kids inside after she had a domestic violence incident with Mr. Negreros. The report also alleged the children did not have a stable place to live and were moving from place to place. DCS made several attempts to locate the family through searching public records, calling last known phone numbers and visiting possible home addresses. Those efforts were unsuccessful. The Department determined in May 2018 that the family could not be located and the case was closed.

On February 7, 2019, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Rodriguez neglected Mateo. The report alleged Ms. Rodriguez was not prepared to care for a newborn child since she lacked housing and did not show an interest in parenting. This investigation was ongoing the fatality report was received on March 16, 2019.