

Statement on the death of a four-year-old girl

Issue Date: March 11, 2020

On September 18, 2019, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the death of a four-year-old girl, Michelle Thresher.

Michelle was found unresponsive in her home and transported to the hospital where she was pronounced deceased.

DCS removed Michelle's siblings from the home and placed them in foster care. One of Michelle's siblings was placed with that child's father.

The Department filed a dependency petition on September 23, 2019, against Michelle's mother, Allie Harris, for allegations, including failing to provide appropriate supervision.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office completed its report on November 25, 2019. The report determined Michelle died from fentanyl toxicity.

On November 4, 2019, the Maricopa County Juvenile Court ruled that Ms. Harris did not provide proper supervision for Michelle at the time of her death.

The Department is currently providing services to the family.

DCS has the following history with Michelle's family:

On August 22, 2011, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Harris neglected one of Michelle's siblings. According to the report, there were concerns the newborn sibling could not be properly cared for at home. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support removing the child from the home. Ms. Harris was provided information on resources in the community. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On May 31, 2014, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Harris neglected one of Michelle's siblings. According to the report, the child was not being properly cared for and there were concerns for domestic violence in the home. During the investigation, the Department received another report involving the family on June 3, 2014. This report alleged Ms. Harris neglected the same child by not providing proper medical care and failed to meet the child's needs. The investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The mother was provided information on resources in the community. Both the May 31st and June 3rd allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

Recipient Name

Page 2

On November 9, 2016, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Harris neglected Michelle Thresher and one of her siblings. According to the report, Ms. Harris was not providing adequate housing or care to the children. The investigation did not find evidence to support removing the children from the home. Ms. Harris agreed to participate in DCS in-home services. The allegations were unsubstantiated. The family successfully completed in-home services and the case was closed.