



## **Statement on the near fatalities of a seven-year-old girl and a five-year-old girl**

**Issue Date: October 1, 2018**

On March 4, 2018, the Department of Child Safety (DCS) received a report regarding the near deaths of a seven-year-old girl and a five-year-old girl.

The day before, the girls were involved in a head-on car accident near Flagstaff, Arizona.

Both girls sustained severe, life-threatening injuries in the accident as they were unrestrained in the vehicle driven by their mother, Natasha Brown.

Another child, who was living in the home at the time of the accident, was assessed as being safe to live with the other parent.

After the seven-year-old girl was released from the hospital, she went to live with a relative.

The five-year-old girl continued to require intensive medical services and remained at a healthcare facility. She currently resides at a long-term care facility.

The Department is currently providing the family with extensive services, including intensive in-home services, DDD services, and parenting skills training.

The Department substantiated the neglect allegations against Ms. Brown on September 8, 2018.

### **DCS History**

Ms. Brown has six prior DCS reports; four of which occurred under previous administrations and prior to systemic improvements at DCS. Ms. Brown is affiliated with an Arizona Tribe. Since tribes have exclusive legal authority over Native American children residing on tribal land, the Department faced jurisdictional issues that influenced the trajectory in some of Ms. Brown's investigations and dictated what levels of intervention the Department could legally employ.

On July 23, 2011, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Brown neglected the seven-year-old near fatality victim. According to the report, Ms. Brown left the child on top of a table and walked away. The child allegedly fell off the table. In addition, the report alleged Ms. Brown

Recipient Name

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was seen slapping the child on the leg to get her to stop crying and Ms. Brown had a history of domestic violence with her boyfriend.

While DCS was investigating this incident, the Department received a report on August 30, 2011, alleging Ms. Brown physically abused the seven-year-old near fatality victim. According to this report, Ms. Brown was seen hitting the girl in a public place. Police were also contacted. Ms. Brown told police that she hit the child to stop her from crying. She denied leaving a bruise on the child. Ms. Brown said she was having trouble parenting and requested services. During the Department's investigation, Ms. Brown started participating in parenting classes and therapy sessions; and accepted child care services through the Department. In addition, Ms. Brown entered a structured living facility where there was constant supervision and monitoring of her parenting practices. As a result, the DCS investigation did not have enough evidence to warrant a removal. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On May 4, 2014, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Brown physically abused the seven-year-old near fatality victim. According to the report, Ms. Brown hit the child on the forehead. The DCS investigation did not find any bruises on the child and the child did not disclose physical abuse. Ms. Brown was also living in a facility that provided constant monitoring of her parenting practices. There was not enough evidence to remove the children. The Department provided the mother with child care services, but she declined parenting classes and counseling services offered by the Department. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On June 28, 2014, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Brown physically abused the seven-year-old near fatality victim. According to the report, Ms. Brown hit the child on her face. The Department strongly encouraged Ms. Brown to accept services through DCS, but she declined. Ms. Brown said she was receiving assistance through tribal social services and she was returning to live on the reservation. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On July 16, 2015, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Brown neglected both girls. According to the report, Ms. Brown was failing to properly feed and supervise her children. In the course of the investigation, DCS could not locate the children as they were reported to be living on the reservation and out of the Department's jurisdiction. DCS sent the report to Tribal Social Services. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was closed.

On July 21, 2017, the Department received a report alleging Ms. Brown medically neglected the near fatality victims' sibling. According to the report, Ms. Brown was failing to properly care for the children's sibling by not seeking initial or follow-up medical treatment for the child. The DCS investigation determined the mother was meeting the child's medical needs and was taking the child to follow-up visits to the doctor. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed.