

Statement on the death of 1-year-old August Walton

Date Issued: March 19, 2025

On June 15, 2023, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the fatality of 1-year-old August Walton, who was taken to the hospital after being found unresponsive at home by his mother, Ms. Walton. The child was pronounced deceased at the hospital. The autopsy determined that August died of fentanyl toxicity.

There were no other children in the home.

On January 31, 2025, Ms. Walton pled guilty to manslaughter and child abuse charges in a Maricopa County Superior Court related to August's death.

The Department did not provide services to the family.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Ms. Walton:

On February 25, 2007, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Ms. Walton. The report alleged that Ms. Walton gave birth to a child who was positive for opiates and cocaine. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the family was provided with information on services available in the community. The case was closed on May 24, 2007.

On January 13, 2009, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Ms. Walton. The report alleged that at the time of birth, Ms. Walton and her newborn were positive for cocaine and methadone. The DCS investigation determined additional involvement was needed to ensure the safety of the newborn and mother's older child, however did not find evidence to support the report allegation. The allegations were unsubstantiated. The child remained in the hospital and an in-home safety plan for a sibling was developed. The in-home plan transitioned to an out-of-home dependency in February 2009 for the sibling. In March 2009, a dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Superior Court for the newborn upon discharge from the hospital. The Department provided services to the family. Ms. Walton's parental rights to both children were terminated in August 2009.

On October 11, 2014, a report was received alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Ms. Walton. The report alleged that at the time of birth, Ms. Walton's drug screen was positive for methadone, oxycodone, and THC. Following an assessment of child safety, the child was removed and a dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Superior Court. The Department provided services to the family. Ms. Walton's parental rights to the child were terminated in 2017 and the allegations of neglect to the child by Ms. Walton were substantiated.

On March 19, 2022, a report was received alleging neglect to August by his mother, Ms. Walton. The report alleged that at the time of August's birth, Ms. Walton tested positive for methadone and marijuana. The birth

had occurred out of state, but an Arizona address was provided by Ms. Walton. Since it was determined that the child resided in another state, the allegations were unsubstantiated, and the case was closed.