



## **Statement on the death of a one-month-old girl, Esmeralda Tavares AKA Ania Gonzales**

**Date Issued: July 28, 2023**

On August 18, 2021, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 1-month-old Esmeralda Tavares who was transported to the hospital and was pronounced deceased.

Upon investigation, it was determined the child died due to fentanyl intoxication following confirmation by the Maricopa Medical Examiner's report. On June 22, 2023, the Department substantiated the allegations of neglect by the child's parents, Vivian Tavares and Arturo Gonzales.

The Department conducted a joint investigation with the Casa Grande Police Department.

There were no other children residing in the home at the time of the incident. The Department is providing services to the family.

DCS received the following prior reports involving the family:

On January 10, 2019, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by Ms. Tavares. The report alleged Ms. Tavares was engaging in domestic violence with the father of the child. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation. The allegation was unsubstantiated and the case was closed on March 7, 2019. There were no services provided to the family.

On July 15, 2019, the Department received a report alleging physical abuse to a child by Mr. Gonzales. The report alleged a child present with a black eye and stated Mr. Gonzales caused it. There were additional concerns of domestic violence. The DCS investigation was pending when another report was received on August 12, 2019. The report alleged neglect to children by Mr. Gonzales. There was another report generated as well for another child residing in the home. The reports alleged Mr. Gonzales was using illicit substances while caring for the children and the substances were in reach of the children. There were additional concerns Mr. Gonzales had slapped the children while under the influence. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations for any of the reports. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the cases were closed. The family was provided with resources in the community.

On January 7, 2020, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by Ms. Tavares. The report alleged Ms. Tavares used marijuana during her pregnancy and had a history of illicit substance use. There were additional concerns of domestic violence. The DCS investigation was pending when another report was received on February 1, 2020. The report alleged neglect to a child by Ms. Tavares. The report alleged Ms. Tavares had taken a child to the hospital for concerns of wheezing and while at the hospital Ms. Tavares was shouting at someone on the phone and then tossed the child onto the hospital bed. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations in either report. The allegations as to both reports were unsubstantiated. The family was referred for in-home services.

On March 17, 2020, the Department received a report alleging physical abuse and neglect to children by Mr. Gonzales. The report alleged Mr. Gonzales was engaging in domestic violence with the mother of this child and the

child sustained an injury as a result. The DCS investigation was pending when another report was received on April 1, 2020. The report alleged neglect to children by Mr. Gonzales. The reported alleged Mr. Gonzales was using illicit substances while caring for the children and had been previously arrested for possession of the illicit substances. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations in either report. The allegations as to both reports were unsubstantiated and the case was closed on April 21, 2020. There were no services provided by the Department.

On March 21, 2020, the Department received a report alleging neglect to children by Ms. Tavares and Mr. Gonzales. The report alleged there was marijuana within reach of the children in the home. There were additional concerns Ms. Tavares expressed she was unable to care for the children. A safety plan was implemented. The family had agreed to in-home services and the case was pending services when this report was received. The DCS investigation resulted in one of the children in the home being assessed as safe with another parent and another child was taken into DCS custody. An out of home dependency petition was filed with the Pinal County Superior Court. The allegations of neglect were substantiated and the family was provided with services.

On June 28, 2021, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Esmeralda by Ms. Tavares. The report alleged Esmeralda was exposed to illicit substances in utero. The DCS investigation resulted in a safety plan being implemented with a family member making unannounced visits to the home. The family was participating in services when the next report was received. On August 15, 2021, a report was received alleging physical abuse and neglect to Esmeralda by Mr. Gonzales. The report alleged Mr. Gonzales had punched Ms. Tavares while she was holding Esmeralda. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. Both reports were pending when the fatality report was received. The allegations were ultimately unsubstantiated. The family was participating in services.