

Statement on the death of 6-month-old Travis Carter Jr.

Date Issued: June 4, 2025

On August 8, 2024, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 6-month-old Travis Carter Jr. The child was found unresponsive in a motor vehicle and was pronounced deceased at the scene. Later, the medical examiner determined that the cause of death was exposure to drugs due to fentanyl toxicity.

Following an assessment of child safety, a sibling was removed from the home and placed with a fictive kin caregiver. The other sibling in the home was assessed as safe with their other parent.

On April 30, 2025, Aleesia Phillips pleaded guilty to misconduct involving weapons and child abuse charges related to Travis' death in Yavapai County Superior Court. Aleesia Phillips was sentenced to a one-year prison sentence followed by a lifetime of supervised probation.

The Department is providing services to the family.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Ms. Phillips:

On June 21, 2013, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by Ms. Phillips. The report alleged Ms. Phillips was using substances in the presence of her 4-year-old child while at home. The Department made multiple efforts to locate the family at their last known address and phone numbers without success. The Department was unable to locate the family and the case was closed on April 30, 2015.

On December 4, 2022, the Department received a report alleging physical abuse to children by Ms. Phillips. The report alleged Ms. Phillips was involved in a motor vehicle accident while under the influence of alcohol and had the children in the car. The DCS investigation did not result in evidence to support the allegation. The allegations were unsubstantiated and the case was in the process of being transferred to in-home services when a second report came in on January 31, 2023.

On January 31, 2023, the Department received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to children by Ms. Phillips. The report alleged Ms. Phillips was pulled over for reckless driving and the children were found unrestrained in the car and without car seats. The DCS investigation resulted in evidence to support the allegations. The allegations were substantiated and the family was provided with in-home services. The in-home case was closed on May 31, 2023.

On February 2, 2024, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Travis Carter Jr. by Ms. Phillips. The report alleged Ms. Phillips exposed Travis to substances while in utero. The DCS investigation did not result in evidence to support the allegation. The allegation of neglect was unsubstantiated as to Aleesia Phillips. The family was provided with information on services available in the community. The case was still open when a second report came in on March 6, 2024.

On March 6, 2024, the Department received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to Travis Carter Jr. and siblings by Ms. Phillips and another adult. The report alleged Ms. Phillips had been observed drinking alcohol, having drug paraphernalia in the home, and smoking marijuana around the children. The DCS investigation did not result in evidence to support the allegations. The allegations of neglect and physical abuse were unsubstantiated as to Ms. Phillips and another adult. The Department offered the family an Arizona Families First referral, which they declined. The case was closed on March 28, 2024.

On July 1, 2024, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Travis Carter Jr. and siblings by Ms. Phillips and another adult. The report alleged concerns about the condition of the home and the children's overall well-being. The investigation case was still open when a second report was received on August 5, 2024.

On August 5, 2024, the Department received a report alleging neglect to the children by Ms. Phillips and another adult. The report alleged a 5-year-old child was found wondering the streets alone and, when returned, there was drug paraphernalia seen in home. The investigation case was open when the fatality report was received. Following the report of the fatality, a dependency petition was filed with the Yavapai County Superior Court and the allegations of neglect are proposed to substantiate as to Ms. Phillips and another adult. The investigation case was closed on September 6, 2024.