

Amendments to the information originally posted on 7/10/2024 are displayed below in red.

Statement on the death of 3-year-old Damien Coats

Date Issued: September 11, 2024

On January 25, 2023, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding 3-year-old Damien Coats, who was transported to the hospital when found unresponsive and stiff in the home. Medical providers administered Narcan and his symptoms temporarily improved, but he ultimately died due to fentanyl intoxication.

There were no other children in the home.

The Department substantiated the allegation of neglect as to the mother, Venicia Belarde, who knowingly allowed the child to reside in a home with active fentanyl users and making it accessible to them. **The Department substantiated the allegation of neglect by the maternal grandmother, Jillian Golden, who failed to seek immediate medical attention for the child.**

There were no services provided by the Department.

DCS received the following prior report involving Ms. Belarde:

On July 10, 2017, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by the mother, Ms. Belarde, and their father. The report alleged parents were using substances and had paraphernalia in the home. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegations. The child was removed from the home and placed in a licensed foster home. A dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Supreme Court and the allegation was substantiated. The family was provided reunification services. Ms. Belarde did not engage in services and a guardianship petition was filed. The guardianship was granted and the case closed on June 15, 2018.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Ms. Golden:

On August 12, 2005, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Jillian Golden. The report alleged the child's meconium was positive for marijuana at birth and the mother, Ms. Golden, was negative. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation of neglect. The allegation was unsubstantiated. No services were offered to the family and the case was closed on September 29, 2005.

On March 3, 2014, the Department received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to a child by their mother, Jillian Golden, and another adult. The report alleged the child was being hit at home and showed the bruises on their back to a classmate. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations of neglect and physical abuse. The allegations were unsubstantiated as to both caregivers. No services were offered to the family as they moved out of state and the case was closed on November 9, 2016.

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On July 19, 2017, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by their mother, Jillian Golden. The report alleged Ms. Golden completed a rule out UA for the Department to be considered as a placement option and tested positive for methamphetamines. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation of neglect. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The Department provided the family with in-home services and the case was closed on October 19, 2017.

On November 6, 2017, the Department received a report alleging neglect toward children by their mother, Jillian Golden, and other adults. The report alleged the other adult had brought the children to a family friends' house since DCS was looking to take custody of the children due to a court ordered investigation being called in from another ongoing report. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegation. The allegations of neglect toward the caregivers were substantiated and the children were removed from the home and placed in licensed foster care. An out of home dependency petition was filed with the Maricopa County Supreme Court. The one child was on runaway status until aging out of the system in 2019. A guardianship petition was filed for the other child. The guardianship was granted on April 4, 2019, and the case closed on April 30, 2019.