

## **Statement on the death of 8-year-old Brayden Butcher**

**Date Issued: May 21, 2024**

On August 12 2022, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the fatality of 8-year-old Brayden Butcher, who was brought to an emergency center and lost consciousness while in the waiting room. He was transported to a hospital where he was ultimately pronounced deceased. Upon examination, multiple injuries were discovered, including fractures.

Following an assessment of child safety, the other children in the home were taken into DCS custody and placed with a relative.

On April 24, 2024, the parents, Joshua A. Butcher and Mercedes M. Caho, were each indicted on one count of first-degree murder and four counts of child abuse in relation to Brayden's death.

The Department is providing services to the family.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Mr. Butcher and Ms. Caho:

On February 9, 2012, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by Ms. Caho. The report alleged concerns with the physical structure of the family home. There were additional concerns of the presence of 20 guns in the residence. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation. The allegation was unsubstantiated. The family declined daycare assistance and the case was closed on May 9, 2013.

On December 15, 2018, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Brayden and a sibling by Mr. Butcher and Ms. Caho. The report alleged concerns of domestic violence between the parents. There were additional concerns of drug paraphernalia in the home. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The allegations were unsubstantiated and no services were offered to the family. The case was closed on April 2, 2019.

On November 26, 2019, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Brayden by Mr. Butcher and Ms. Caho. The report alleged concerns Brayden was attending school with a full diaper and often times with a strong odor. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The allegations were unsubstantiated and no services were offered to the family. The case was closed on December 13, 2019.

On April 30, 2020, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Brayden and his siblings by Mr. Butcher, Ms. Caho and another adult. The report alleged concerns the children were in a vehicle with Ms. Caho and her significant other was driving recklessly, as well as concerns for lack of supervision of the children while in the bathtub. There were additional concerns of substance abuse by Ms. Caho and her significant other. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegations and the children were taken into DCS custody and placed with a relative. A dependency petition was filed with the Pima County Superior Court and the family was provided services. The parents successfully completed services and reunified with the children. The dependency

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was dismissed in September 2021 and case was closed on October 12, 2021. The allegations as to Ms. Caho and Mr. Butcher were substantiated.

On February 16, 2022, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Brayden and his siblings by Mr. Butcher. The report alleged concerns Mr. Butcher was hitting Ms. Caho and threw a computer and broke it. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The allegations were unsubstantiated and no services were offered to the family. The case was closed on March 11, 2022.

On May 10, 2022, the Department received a report alleging neglect to Brayden and his sibling by Mr. Butcher and Ms. Caho. The report alleged concerns of ongoing domestic violence in the home. The DCS investigation was pending investigation when the fatality occurred. The siblings came into DCS custody on August 12, 2022, and were placed with a relative. The dependency matter is ongoing and services are being provided to the family.