

**Amendments to the information originally posted on 5/13/2024 are displayed below in red.**

## Statement on the near death of a 4-year-old male child

**Date Issued: July 3, 2024**

On March 30, 2024, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding a 4-year-old child who was taken to the hospital after sustaining an accidental gunshot wound to the chest. The child obtained an unsecured firearm which resulted in the near fatality victim being shot in the presence of Laquasha Sebastian.

Following an assessment of child safety, the other child in the home was assessed as safe with their mother. The near fatality victim was taken into DCS custody and a dependency petition was filed. Upon release from the hospital, the near fatality victim was placed with a relative.

On March 27, 2024, Laquasha Sebastian was indicted by a Maricopa County grand jury with one count of child abuse. **On June 4, 2024, the Maricopa County Superior Court found the child dependent as to the father, Kevin Rhymes.**

The Department is providing services to the family.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Mrs. Sebastian **and Mr. Rhymes:**

**On January 20, 2016, the Department received a report alleging neglect toward children by the father, Kevin Rhymes, and another adult. The report alleged the children (ages 9, 10 & 14) were being left in the home while the adults were at work. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation. The allegation of neglect was unsubstantiated as to both caregivers. No services were offered to the family and the case was closed.**

**On July 14, 2017, the Department received a report alleging neglect toward children by the father, Kevin Rhymes, and another adult. The report alleged concerns of sexual assault. Another report was received during the investigation of this report with concerns of a child being exposed to substances while in utero. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegations. A dependency petition was filed and the Department provided the family with reunification services. The children were returned back to the other adult and the dependency case closed in June 2018. The allegations of neglect were substantiated.**

**On July 13, 2018, the Department received a report alleging physical abuse to a child by the father, Kevin Rhymes. The report alleged Mr. Rhymes physically abused the child while in his care. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation. The allegation of physical abuse was unsubstantiated to the father. No services were offered and the case was closed on July 31, 2018.**

**On December 31, 2018, the Department received a report alleging neglect towards a child by the father, Kevin Rhymes, and another adult. The report alleged concerns of Mr. Rhymes driving recklessly, following the other**

adult and child with his car. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegation. The allegation of neglect was substantiated against the father, Kevin Rhymes. The child was assessed as safe with their parent. A list of community resources was offered to the family and the case was closed on March 15, 2019.

On June 15, 2020, the Department received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse towards a child by the father, Kevin Rhymes. The report alleged concerns of Mr. Rhymes physically abusing the child and teaching them pimping behavior. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The allegations of neglect and physical abuse were unsubstantiated. No services were offered to the family and the case closed out on September 27, 2020.

On December 20, 2021, the Department received a report alleging neglect to the near fatality victim and sibling against their parents. The report alleged concerns of children (ages 2 & 3) being left home alone without a caregiver. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegation. The children were taken into DCS custody and an out of home dependency petition was filed. On March 28, 2022, the near fatality victim was assessed as safe with his father, Kevin Rhymes, and the dependency was dismissed. The allegation of neglect was substantiated as to the mother.

On May 1, 2023, the Department received a report alleging neglect to the near fatality victim by his father, Kevin Rhymes, and significant other, Laquasha Sebastian. The report alleged concerns of a verbal altercation between the adults and disassembled firearms in the home. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The allegations were unsubstantiated and no services were provided to the family. The case was closed on May 26, 2023.