

Statement on the near death of four-month-old female

Date Issued: May 21, 2024

On January 15, 2024, the Department of Child Safety received a report regarding a 4-month-old female child who was found in the home to be severely malnourished. Upon examination, the child was determined to be in critical condition with hypothermia and low blood sugar levels. The child is diagnosed with Moebius syndrome.

Following an assessment of child safety, the other child in the home was placed in licensed foster care. Upon release from the hospital, the near fatality victim was placed in a licensed DDD foster home.

On January 18, 2024, a dependency petition was filed with Maricopa County Juvenile Court. On February 23, 2024, the court found the mother, Valerie Pizano, neglected the near fatality victim.

The Department is providing services to the family.

DCS received the following prior reports involving Mrs. Pizano:

On November 17, 2017, the Department received a report alleging neglect toward children by mother, Valerie Pizano and a father. The report alleged the mother was being arrested, leaving the children alone in the home without a caretaker. There were also concerns of substance use. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegations. The children were taken into DCS custody and a dependency petition was filed. The family was offered reunification services. The children were returned to their mother's care on July 11, 2018, and the dependency was dismissed on September 6, 2018. The allegations were substantiated against both parents.

On March 23, 2022, the Department received a report alleging neglect to a child by mother, Valerie Pizano. The report alleged the child was exposed to methamphetamines in utero. There were also concerns of domestic violence and that Ms. Pizano was homeless. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations. The family was provided with information on services available in the community and the case was closed on June 8, 2022. The allegation was unsubstantiated.

On December 22, 2022, the Department received a report alleging neglect and physical abuse to a child by their mother, Valerie Pizano, and father. The report alleged the mother was behaving erratically while under the influence of substances, which impacted her ability to care for the child. The DCS investigation found evidence to support the allegations. The child was taken into DCS custody and a dependency petition was filed. An in-home safety plan was implemented on January 4, 2023 with responsible adults. The Department continued to offer reunification services to the family. The dependency was dismissed on July 5, 2023. The allegations were substantiated against both parents.