

## **Statement on the near death of a one-year-old female**

**Date Issued: April 11, 2025**

On May 19, 2023, the Arizona Department of Child Safety received a report regarding the near fatality of a 1-year-old child who was transported to the hospital after being found unresponsive. Upon examination, the child was determined to be in critical condition due to ingesting fentanyl.

Upon release from the hospital, the near fatality victim was discharged home with an in-home safety plan that included a relative supervising contact between the mother and child. Subsequently, the child was taken into DCS custody. She was placed in a licensed foster home until she transitioned to placement with a relative out of state. There were no other children in the home.

On July 19, 2023, the Department filed a dependency petition with the Maricopa County Superior Court alleging neglect to the near fatality victim by her mother, Alexis Mertens. On September 29, 2023 the mother pleaded no contest to the allegations.

The Department is providing services to the child as Ms. Mertens' parental rights were terminated as to the near fatality victim.

DCS received the following prior report involving Ms. Mertens:

On July 10, 2021, the Department received a report alleging neglect to the near fatality victim by Ms. Mertens. The report alleged Ms. Mertens exposed the child to marijuana and oxycodone in utero. The DCS investigation did not find evidence to support the allegation. The allegation was unsubstantiated. Ms. Mertens declined voluntary in-home services offered by the Department and the case was closed on September 29, 2021.