

Child Fatality Review #08-27
Region 6
Cowlitz County

This three-month-old Caucasian female died from positional asphyxiation.

Case Overview

On June 3, 2008, law enforcement was dispatched to the family home of this deceased child on a report that she was not breathing. Officers attempted CPR. Officers spoke to the mother who said that she found her husband sleeping on the couch, her daughter lying on his body with her face toward his arm. The deceased child's mother pulled her from her husband and noticed that she was not breathing. She called 911. The coroner's report indicated that the cause of the child's death was probable positional asphyxia with the manner of death being undetermined.

The autopsy also revealed the child suffered a broken bone in her right arm. The child's father was seen handling her in a rough manner shortly after she was born. The police officer reported there are indications the child may have been abused.

The deceased child's father reported the broken arm when it occurred on May 31, 2008. He called 911 and reported he heard a "pop" when he shifted his daughter in his arms. Her arm became caught under his armpit, authorities said. The child was taken to a doctor for this injury. Doctors did not detect an injury at that time. According to the police report, the coroner said the broken arm could not have happened in the manner the father explained. The coroner determined the child's arm was broken on or around May 31st.

The father was later charged with first and second degree assault of a child. He has not been charged in the child's death. There is no indication this child's death was the result of abuse or neglect.

This is the second baby to die in this family. The couple's 34-day-old son died in January 2006 of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Referral History

On March 13, 2008, staff at a hospital reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake concerns about the behavior of the father toward his newborn daughter (the deceased child). The referrer reported the father was seen feeding the deceased child and said, "Come on, just eat the food!" The father's affect at the time was impatient and not playful. The father handled the baby roughly. The child's mother told hospital staff she had a baby die of SIDS about one year prior. The parents had good family support at the hospital. The baby was fine medically. There was no suspicion of drug or alcohol use by

either parent. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program was already involved with this family. The parents refused referrals to other local services. This referral was screened as Information Only.

On June 3, 2008, CPS intake received a report from law enforcement about the death of this child. There were no allegations of abuse or neglect reported. This referral was screened as Information Only.

On June 27, 2008, CPS intake received a report from law enforcement. During the autopsy, they found this child had a fractured arm that occurred three days prior to her death. The child was taken to the doctor for this injury, but the x-rays were taken incorrectly. After several interviews and gathering of evidence, police arrested the father for 2nd Degree Assault of a Child. There is no indication that this injury had a connection to this child's death. The investigation into this child's death continued. The medical examiner reported there was no indication that this injury was inflicted intentionally. This CPS investigation was closed with an inconclusive finding.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue: None indicated

Recommendation: None