

Child Fatality Review #08-46
Region 4
King County

This seven-month-old Native American female died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Case Overview

On August 7, 2008, the King County Medical Examiner reported the deceased child was placed in her crib at 9:30 a.m. The mother placed her on her back in her crib. Her mother checked on her at 10:30 a.m. and she was fine. The child was found unresponsive in her crib at 12:30 p.m. She was found on her back, but had moved nearly 180 degrees in the crib. There were multiple blankets underneath and on top of her. She was found with a blanket over her face and upper torso. The temperature of the room was 80 degrees and there was no air circulation. The death was certified as SIDS.

Referral History

On March 5, 1999, a report was made to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that the parents use drugs around their baby. It was further alleged that parents partied all the time, used crank and stole to buy drugs. The family was residing in Yakima County. This referral was screened out for investigation.

On October 19, 2001, staff at a drug and alcohol treatment facility reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) the deceased child's mother left her children unattended in a bedroom, did not follow doctor recommendations, and could not recognize her children's feeding cues. Two of the children moved in with the mother's boyfriend. There was prior domestic violence between the mother and her boyfriend. All of these children are older siblings to the deceased child. This referral was accepted for investigation by CPS and closed with no finding.

On March 23, 2005, an anonymous referrer reported to CPS intake that the mother of the deceased child allowed a level three sex offender to frequent the family home. This referral was accepted for investigation by CPS and closed with an unfounded finding for negligent treatment or maltreatment.

On October 9, 2007, a school staff member reported to CPS intake that the then seven-year-old brother of the deceased child said he was slapped by his mother. The referrer observed a bruise on the tip of his ear lobe. The sibling talked about abuse of his siblings as well as domestic violence between his parents. This referral was accepted for investigation by CPS. The investigating social worker spoke with the seven-year-old and his two older siblings. The older brothers denied being abused and denied their seven-year-old brother was physically abused. The mother denied domestic violence in her current relationship with the deceased child's father. She admitted there was domestic violence in her relationship with her sons' father. The CPS social worker documented observing the children and did not see any bruising on the seven-year-old or the two-

year-old (the deceased child's siblings). The referral was investigated and closed with an unfounded finding for physical abuse and negligent treatment or maltreatment.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue: Some of the reports, most notably the referral dated March 5, 1999, taken in Region 2 were screened as Information Only. It appears that some could have been screened in for investigation.

Recommendation: Region 2 should review the screening decisions on reports concerning this family.

Issue: Sleep Safety: the infant was in a crib but there were several blankets and it was a hot summer day.

Recommendation: The King County Child Death Review team, under Public Health, will discuss this case on February 18, 2009.