

**Child Fatality Review #08-61**  
**Region 6**  
**Mason County**

This 4-year-old Caucasian male died in a house fire.

**Case Overview**

On October 24, 2008, this child and his 16-year-old sister died in a house fire at the family home located in Mason County. It was initially reported that the fire started on a couch. The other four children in the home as well as the mother escaped without injury. The father was not home at the time. The parents are licensed foster parents and had adopted the two deceased children. A seven-year-old foster child was also in the home for a weekend respite placement. He was unharmed. An investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) determined that most likely the 16-year-old sister started the fire.

There was another fire in this home in October 2007. Before the investigation into the 2008 fire, it was believed this fire was accidentally ignited by the 12-year-old sister of the deceased child. ATF investigators investigating the 2008 incident, speculate that the 16-year-old started both fires. The County Coroner ruled this 4-year-old's death a homicide. The official cause of death is asphyxiation due to fire.

**Referral History**

On February 6, 2006, school personnel reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that the seven-year-old brother of the deceased child told his teacher he was upset because of problems he was having at home. The child said his parents call him "bad words." He also said his father gets mad and pulls his ears. The child had no visible injuries, though complained his ear was tender. The referrer noted what appeared to be a faint grab-like mark on the child's arm. The child's teacher reported to intake that the boy tends to exaggerate. This referral was screened out for investigation by CPS.

On July 8, 2008, a juvenile detention staff reported to CPS intake that the 16-year-old sister of the deceased child was picked up by a Kitsap County Sheriff Deputy. She was gone from home for 12 to 13 hours and was found approximately 30 miles from home riding a bike. This referral was screened in for Family Reconciliation Services (FRS). The mother expressed interest in this service.

On October 25, 2008, a report was made to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake regarding the house fire that occurred at this licensed foster home. The investigation revealed that the 16-year-old sister of the deceased child started the fire that also claimed her life. The referral was screened in for investigation by the Division of Licensed Resources / Child Protective Services Section (DLR/CPS) was closed with an unfounded finding for negligent treatment or maltreatment.

**Issues and Recommendations**

**Issue:** None identified.

**Recommendation:** None