

**Child Fatality Review #08-65**  
**Region 2**  
**Skamania County**

This four-month-old Caucasian male died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

**Case Overview**

On November 9, 2008, the Skamania County Sheriff's Office reported the death of this four-month-old infant. The parents woke around 2:00 a.m. and found their son non-responsive. They took him to a relative who lived nearby and he called 911. Medics performed CPR on the child and transported him to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead. The parents and the infant were co-sleeping in a twin size bed. Yakama Tribal police completed an investigation due to the incident occurring on tribal trust property. The child's mother is well known to county law enforcement as a user of methamphetamine. The autopsy was completed by the Clark County Medical Examiner. The autopsy showed no trauma or abuse. The official cause of death was determined to be SIDS.

**Referral History**

On March 4, 2005, it was reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that the deceased child's mother used methamphetamine during her pregnancy with her older child. This child, the deceased child's brother, tested positive for methamphetamine and marijuana at the time of his birth. The mother agreed to voluntarily place him in foster care while she attempted to get clean and sober. She was unable to remain drug-free. The department eventually filed a dependency petition on her son. Her parental rights were ultimately terminated for non-compliance with court ordered services. The child's father voluntarily relinquished his rights. This child has since been adopted. The referral was screened in for investigation by CPS and closed with a founded finding for negligent treatment or maltreatment.

On November 21, 2006, a social work professional reported to CPS intake that the deceased child's mother reported to staff at a DSHS office that she was pregnant. She was living with a person known in the community as a drug user and dealer. She appeared to be using methamphetamine because her teeth were in serious decay and she had sores all over her face. The mother was in her first trimester of her pregnancy. This referral was screened as information only.

On February 11, 2008, a social work professional reported to CPS intake that the deceased child's mother was pregnant and due in August 2008. It was unknown if she obtained prenatal care for this pregnancy. The referrer believed the mother continued to use drugs as she had obvious sores on her face. Due to the history of involvement with the department, the referrer wanted to inform Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of this information. This referral was screened as information only.

On July 29, 2008, a social work professional reported to CPS intake that the deceased child's mother gave birth to this child earlier in the week. The mother was very well known in the community as a methamphetamine user. It was unknown if the hospital tested the mother or the child for drugs, however, no medical professional expressed concerns about the child's well-being at birth. This referral was screened as information only.

On November 9, 2008, law enforcement reported to CPS intake the death of this child. The parents and this child all slept in the same bed. The mother is a known methamphetamine user. Law enforcement did not find anything suspicious during their initial investigation. No inflicted trauma or abuse was evident during the autopsy. The medical examiner ruled this death to be the result of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. This referral was screened as information only.

### **Issues and Recommendations**

**Issue:** The referral dated July 29, 2008 initially was screened in high risk emergent by the White Salmon office in Region 2, due to the mother's CPS history, a history that includes termination of parental rights on a previous child. When it was discovered that the incident address defaulted to the Stevenson office in Region 6, the referral was transferred to the Stevenson office and the intake supervisor in Region 6 changed the screening decision to Information Only.

**Recommendation:** A family's history in which parental rights had been terminated in the past should elevate the standard by which a new intake is assessed and subsequently screened for investigation. When there is a disagreement on a level of risk between offices, it is best practice to take the issue up the chain of command.