

Child Fatality Review #08-77
Region 3
Skagit County

This one-month-old Caucasian female died following a seizure.

Case Overview

On December 19, 2008, this one-month-old infant was found non-responsive by her maternal grandmother. The infant was sleeping in a bed with her mother. This infant and her mother were both living in the maternal grandmother's home. The grandmother performed CPR on the infant and she was revived. When medics arrived the deceased child was taken to a local hospital and then transferred to Children's Hospital in Seattle and placed on life support. The decision was made to withdraw the life support when it was determined that there was no longer brain function. The child died on the fourth day after the incident. An autopsy revealed the death was due to a probable seizure caused by a hypoxic/ischemic encephalopathy related brain injury at birth. Hypoxic/ischemic encephalopathy occurs when the brain and central nervous system are damaged because the oxygen supply to the brain is interrupted. It was also determined that there was no evidence of overlay. The infant had a seizure disorder related to her difficult delivery.

Referral History

On November 16, 2008, hospital staff reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that the deceased child and her mother were to be discharged from the hospital after a difficult delivery. This infant remained hospitalized for nine days after her birth due to tremors in her arms. Doctors diagnosed this child with a seizure disorder. There was a concern that mother planned to take the newborn to live in the home of the presumed father and his wife. The father's children were recently removed from that home due to unsafe and unsanitary conditions. The mother was resistant to services offered by the department. She was actively involved in the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program as well as maternity services. This referral was screened in for investigation by CPS and closed with an unfounded finding for negligent treatment or maltreatment.

On November 18, 2008, hospital staff again reported to CPS intake that the deceased child and her mother were to be discharged from the hospital and continued to say she and her newborn daughter were moving in with the baby's father. The referrer said this home was very cold and dirty. There were cat feces on the floor and the sink was piled with dirty dishes. The septic system did not work and the toilet was backed up. The referrer was concerned about bringing a newborn infant into this home. The mother later decided not to move in with her child's father. This referral was screened in for investigation by CPS and closed with an unfounded finding for negligent treatment or maltreatment.

On December 15, 2008, law enforcement reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that they were called out to a home when the deceased child was first discovered non-responsive. The child's grandmother initiated CPR and the child was revived and taken to a hospital. She died four days later. This referral was screened in for investigation by CPS and closed with an unfounded finding for negligent treatment or maltreatment and physical abuse.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue: The assigned CPS worker made arrangements with the Children's Hospital social work staff to notify CPS when this particular child was discharged, so the worker could check on the child's living conditions at home. This did not happen as arranged and CPS was unaware until ten days after the discharge that the infant had returned home.

Recommendation: The Region 3 Medical Consultant previously set up a system with Children's Hospital to notify Children's Administration when a medically complicated foster child is discharged. She will discuss with the hospital the possibility of expanding this system, or streamlining the communication between Children's Administration and Children's Hospital on all medically complicated, high risk cases.