



**OKLAHOMA COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
OFFICE OF JUVENILE SYSTEM OVERSIGHT**

Report Release Date: December 26, 2019

**Review of the Near-Death of C.S.
Of Comanche County, Oklahoma**

General Information

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request for a public report regarding the near-death of C.S. of Comanche County. A charge of Child Abuse by Injury was filed in Comanche County District Court on December 30, 2015, against Keith Rich, a Person Responsible for the Child (PRFC). Keith Rich entered a blind plea of Guilty on January 16, 2018. He was convicted and sentenced to ten years with four years required to be served and six years suspended on March 6, 2018.

Authorization

The following is a summary of the actions taken by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS); the dates and outcome of investigations and actions taken by the OKDHS; the actions taken by the district attorney; the dates and summary of judicial proceedings; and the rulings of the court, as authorized by 10A O.S. Section 1-6-105.

Identifiers:

Child's Name: C.S.
Age at time of Incident: Seventeen months old
Date of Near Death: September 27, 2015
Alleged PRFC: Keith Rich
Sibling One: Nine years old
Sibling Two: Eight years old
Sibling Three: Six years old
Sibling Four: Three years old
Sibling Five: Two months old

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) did not become aware of this case until after the near-death of C.S.

Near Death Incident

On September 27, 2015, C.S. was admitted to a medical facility in critical condition due to near death strangulation. C.S. also had a laceration on the chest, lacerations and bruises on the neck, bruising on the right outer chest, ligature marks on the outer chest, significant damage to the neck, and the jaw was clenched and biting the child's tongue. The child was

not breathing, and was transported to another facility. The five siblings were placed in OKDHS custody.

Initially, Keith Rich reported that he had been living in the family home for the previous two months. He reported that the day of the incident he was doing laundry and was in and out of the room where C.S. was taking a nap. He stated the first time in the room C.S. was lying down but was awake. He reported the next time he went into the room C.S. was lying face down and he heard a grunt. He reported that he rolled C.S. over and the child's lips were blue. He reported that he saw a red crayon on the bed next to C.S. which was wet and had bite marks on it. Keith stated that the child's jaw was clenched and C.S. was biting their own tongue. He reported he tried to open C.S.'s mouth but was unable to do it. It was at this time 911 was contacted.

A Medical Specialist reported that the injuries to the child were not consistent with choking on an object, but rather consistent with strangulation due to the seizure activity. The seizure activity experienced by the child as a result of the obstruction of blood flow to the brain was more consistent with being choked. According to the OKDHS documentation in an Addendum to the Report to the District Attorney in early January, the child welfare specialist was contacted by law enforcement to notify OKDHS that Keith Rich had confessed to strangling C.S. when the child would not stop crying. When he picked up C.S. the child scratched his eye and he dropped the child. Keith then stated he caught the child by the neck and held the child there while rubbing his eye. He reported that he then realized he was holding C.S. by the neck and was choking the child. He reported he did this for 15 to 20 seconds. He reported that when he put the child down C.S. was not breathing. He also confessed that he made up the story about the crayon because he was scared. A Medical Specialist reported that this story of strangulation seemed plausible but that the excessive damage to the child indicated being choked from thirty seconds to one minute, not 15 to 20 seconds. The allegations of Abuse Near Death and Failure to Protect of C.S. were both Substantiated as to the biological parents.

Prior Involvement of the PRFC with the Department of Human Services

There was no prior involvement of Keith Rich with the OKDHS that was pertinent to this near death incident.

Judicial proceedings prior to the child's near death

There were no prior judicial proceedings in regard to Keith Rich.