

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

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**Report Release Date: August 30, 2016**

**Review of the Death of SaRiah Pesti**

**of Washington County, Oklahoma**

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**General Information**

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request for a public report regarding the death of four-month-old SaRiah Pesti.

**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 DHS; 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:	SaRiah Pesti
Date of Birth:	November 11, 2015
Date of Death:	March 13, 2016
Person Responsible for the Child:	Jesse Carlos Pesti, biological father

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) did not become aware of this case until after the death of SaRiah Pesti.

**Criminal Charges**

A felony Murder charge and one count of Kidnapping were filed in Washington County District Court on March 11, 2016, against SaRiah's biological father, Jesse Carlos Pesti.

**Death Incident**

The death report was received by the Washington County OKDHS on March 10, 2016. Law Enforcement (LE) had requested a Joint Response with the OKDHS. The OKDHS had been contacted regarding a four-month-old, SaRiah Pesti, who was unresponsive and lethargic. The child had a right skull fracture and a left subdural hematoma. Reportedly, SaRiah had bruises on her face, arms, legs, and stomach. SaRiah had also been strangled. Reportedly, the mother left the home to call the police after witnessing the father, Jesse Pesti, slap SaRiah. Approximately forty-five minutes after she left the home contact was made with the police. Reportedly, SaRiah Pesti had been transported to a hospital where she was later pronounced deceased on March 13, 2016.

The OKDHS accepted this report as a Priority 1 Investigation. An allegation of Abuse-Death to SaRiah Pesti by her father, Jesse Pesti, and the mother was made. During the course of the investigation allegations of Neglect-Abandonment and Failure to Protect to SaRiah Pesti by her mother were also made. According to the Medical Examiner's report, the cause of death to SaRiah Pesti was blunt force trauma to the head and the manner of death was homicide. The OKDHS made findings of Substantiated as to the death of SaRiah Pesti by her father, Jesse Pesti, and Failure to Protect and Abandonment by the mother. The OKDHS Unsubstantiated the allegation of death by the mother.

### **Prior Involvement with the Department of Human Services**

#### Report to the OKDHS Alleging Abuse/Neglect (November 12, 2015) (Washington County)

Reportedly, the mother delivered a full term baby, whose name was SaRiah Pesti. During the mother's pregnancy, she presented to a hospital on a number of occasions. Reportedly, on one of these occasions, she advised hospital personnel that she had a green alien in her body and needed it out. Following the baby's birth, a medical professional expressed concern that the baby would be at-risk of harm if the mother was in a psychotic state. A medical professional recommended the baby not go home with the parents.

This report was received on November 12, 2015, and the OKDHS accepted this report as a Priority 1 Investigation. The OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated finding on Neglect-Threat of Harm and recommended the family engage in Comprehensive Home-Based Services, a mental health counseling service, and Sooner Start. The OKDHS found the child safe with the parents. Collaterals stated the parents did well with the child, appearing to be loving and caring.

### **Judicial Proceedings prior to the Child's Death Incident**

There were no prior judicial proceedings.