

Office of Juvenile System Oversight

REVIEW OF THE DEATH OF SKY HOLLAND CARTER COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

Report Release Date: November 4, 2024

OVERVIEW

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request to conduct a case review concerning the death of Sky Holland.

On January 4, 2023, the Carter County District Attorney charged the biological mother, Victoria Holland, with a felony for second-degree murder and six counts of child neglect.

IDENTIFIERS

Child's Name:	Date of Birth:	Date of Death:
Sky Love Holland	February 5, 2022	August 6, 2022
Person Responsible for Child (PRFC):	Additional Identifiers:	
Victoria Michelle Holland (Biological Mother)	Sibling One: Six Years Old Sibling Two: Five Years Old Sibling Three: Four Years Old Sibling Four: Two Years Old	

ACTIONS

The release of the following summary of the actions taken by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) and the proceedings in the district court is authorized by 10A O.S. § 1-6-105H.

The OJSO did not become aware of this case until after the death incident of Sky Holland.

DEATH INCIDENT

On August 6, 2022, a child death report was received by the OKDHS office in Carter County. Law enforcement was reportedly on the scene of Sky Holland's death. According to reports, the mother, Victoria Holland, had been staying the night with her boyfriend. She put Sky Holland to bed in a laundry basket with blankets and a Boppy pillow, a practice she reported doing when staying at her boyfriend's home. Victoria and her boyfriend were watching movies in another room. The following morning, when Victoria checked on Sky, she found Sky unresponsive and not breathing, with the boyfriend's dog lying on top of Sky.

- OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority I Investigation.

INVESTIGATION

Victoria Holland, her biological father, boyfriend, and third-party witnesses were interviewed during the investigation.

On August 6, 2022, the OKDHS responded to a joint response at the police department. Ms. Holland informed law enforcement that six-month-old Sky Holland had been observed sleeping earlier that morning. However, when checked on later, Ms. Holland found Sky unresponsive with a pit bull on top of her. Sky was not breathing and was pronounced deceased upon arrival at the emergency room, after which she was transported to the medical examiner's office in Oklahoma City.

On August 9, 2022, a walkthrough of Victoria's apartment was conducted. The OKDHS worker documented that the home was in disarray, with clothes strewn about and fleas covering the worker's leg. The children were observed to have some bites on their legs and bodies.

It was discovered that the family had an open investigation for lack of supervision and inadequate care of the children. It had been previously reported that Victoria Holland left her children home alone while she was out at a bar with friends. The prior investigation had been opened on July 13, 2022.

The front yard of the home had trash scattered on the ground. The home was cluttered with clothes and toys all over the floor and furniture. In the master bedroom, marijuana products were found in an ashtray within reach of the children, and beer bottles were also accessible to them. The child welfare worker reported having bites on her lower legs and found multiple fleas all over her legs. Sibling One had what appeared to be flea bites on their back.

On August 9, 2022, while at OKDHS, a diaper change of Sibling Four was observed, revealing a severe diaper rash and multiple bites on the child's legs and inner thigh. The rash extended from Sibling Four's inner thighs to the entire privates and buttocks. Sibling Four was taken to an urgent care medical facility and provided antibiotic creams. Doctors did not identify the bites but ruled out scabies and staph infections.

On August 9, 2022, a child safety meeting was held where all five safety thresholds were crossed as follows:

- Severe by leaving the children in the care of Sibling One, the oldest child (age six), while Ms. Holland went to the bar and drank to the point of intoxication. The home was unsanitary and unsafe for children aged one year to six. Severe due to the unexplained death of Ms. Holland's youngest child, Sky.
- Observables were met during disclosures from Sibling One and Sibling Two during forensic interviews and regarding the home's condition.
- Out of control was met due to Ms. Holland's mental health and the death of Sky while in her care, with no other adults in the home to protect the children.
- Vulnerable was met because of the ages of the children.
- Imminent was met because Ms. Holland had previous allegations of neglecting her children and had an open Child Protective Services investigation for the death of Sky.
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Safety Threat #8, "PRFC cannot or will not control behavior," is applied. Safety Threat #2, "Person(s) responsible for the child in the home lacks the knowledge, skills, motivation, or abilities to perform parental duties and responsibilities," is also applied.

The medical examiner's report documented that the probable cause of death was pulmonary congestion and edema. Hairs were found in the trachea and stomach, there was no lethal physical trauma, and the manner of death was ruled an accident.

- OKDHS made a Substantiated Finding of Lack of Supervision by Ms. Holland to Siblings One, Two, Three, and Four.
- OKDHS made a Substantiated Finding of Inadequate Physical Care by Ms. Holland for Siblings One and Four.
- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Abuse/Death by Ms. Holland to Sky.

The OKDHS recommended that Siblings One, Two, Three, and Four be removed from Ms. Holland's custody. The

OKDHS recommended a deprived petition be filed on behalf of the children.

PRIOR INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRFC WITH OKLAHOMA DEPT. OF HUMAN SERVICES

The OJSO identified seven pertinent reports of child abuse and neglect before the death incident of six-month-old Sky Holland.

Pertinent Report 1

On January 26, 2019, the first pertinent report was received by the OKDHS office in Carter County. The biological mother, Victoria Holland, was experiencing mental health issues and left her children with neighbors. Ms. Holland was reported to go to the emergency room daily for suicidal ideations. She left the newborn with a neighbor who had an open Family-Centered Services case with OKDHS Child Welfare. Ms. Holland was also reported to have no family nearby. Her home was described as dirty, with no further details provided.

- OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority II Investigation

During the investigation, the biological mother, Victoria Holland, was cooperative. The home was observed to be cluttered but not dirty, and no safety issues were found. The children's minimal basic needs were met with formula and diapers, and everyone had proper sleeping arrangements.

The worker spoke with Ms. Holland about her mental health concerns. Ms. Holland was open and reported that she had seen a doctor and was prescribed Zoloft, which has a warning label advising against use for individuals with previous suicide attempts. Ms. Holland reported that she stopped taking the medicine and felt leveled out. Her doctor then placed her on Depakote. Ms. Holland also reported that her mental health worsened after she had a baby.

On March 2, 2019, the on-call worker was contacted due to Ms. Holland's suicide attempt. Ms. Holland had taken her children to a sitter, ingested 25 Depakote pills, and drank alcohol. She was found unconscious on the floor and was taken to a crisis center. Ms. Holland's mother took custody of the children until Ms. Holland was stable and able to care for them properly.

OKDHS decided to set up a safety plan with Ms. Holland's mother and the neighbors. The plan involved different individuals checking on Ms. Holland while Community Home-Based Services (CHBS) were provided in the home to ensure the children's safety. Ms. Holland agreed to the plan and signed it.

The worker documented that the home was found to be appropriate, and Ms. Holland demonstrated protective capacities by taking the children somewhere before her suicide attempt. Ms. Holland was agreeable to CHBS services and signed the plan.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect-Threat of Harm to Sibling One, Sibling Two, and Sibling Three by Ms. Holland.
- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect-Inadequate or Dangerous Shelter to Sibling One, Sibling Two, and Sibling Three by Ms. Holland.

No further recommendations were made.

Pertinent Report 2

On March 2, 2019, the second report was received by the OKDHS office in Carter County. The biological mother, Victoria Holland, was reported to have been suffering from severe postpartum depression. Ms. Holland was taking medication. It was reported that Ms. Holland would leave the children with anyone who would watch them and was often gone for long periods. The neighbors had been helping Ms. Holland. Although Ms. Holland was previously described as a good mother, she was no longer behaving as she used to. The children were often left in full diapers, and Ms. Holland had been drinking until she blacked out. The neighbors continued to help, as Ms. Holland had no other support.

The OKDHS screened out the report and did not accept it for investigation. The OKDHS documented, “The children are newborn, 1, and 2 years old.” The mother is suffering from severe postpartum depression and is taking medication for it. She leaves the children with neighbors for long periods. She is drinking to the point of having blackouts – sometimes while she’s home alone with the children.

Pertinent Report 3

On March 2, 2019, the second report on this date was the third pertinent report the OKDHS office had received. The biological mother, Victoria Holland, was reported to have attempted suicide that evening. Ms. Holland had taken her children to a babysitter earlier that day. She was supposed to see a friend and go to the grocery store. After no one heard from her, the sitter and a neighbor went to check on her and found Ms. Holland on the floor of her apartment. Ms. Holland had taken a bottle of pills. A call was made to 911, and the police arrived. Ms. Holland was taken to the hospital.

Ms. Holland admitted to the suicide attempt. She stated that her mother was picking up the children while she was in inpatient care at a hospital receiving help. The worker documented that Ms. Holland demonstrated protective capacities by placing her children with the babysitter before she acted.

Family members posed questions about who was going to care for the children. The worker advised that Victoria had the authority to place her children where she wanted, and Victoria had chosen her mother.

The OKDHS screened out the report and did not accept it for investigation. The OKDHS documented that “Joint Response has already been initiated. Another referral was assigned as a P2 [Priority II] Assessment, which has not been initiated but can be sent back to the hotline for screening on the family.”

Pertinent Report 4

On April 19, 2019, the fourth pertinent report was received by the OKDHS office. The reporter stated that Community Home Based Services (CHBS) had been placed in the home after Ms. Holland attempted suicide approximately a month and a half earlier. Once CHBS was involved, OKDHS closed the case.

The CHBS service remained in the home for only three weeks. During that time, instability was reported. Ms. Holland stopped attending mental health counseling. She was employed but either quit or was let go a couple of weeks ago. The home’s condition would vary; it was okay one day, and trash was strewn throughout the house the next. The children were reported to have scabs that were not being properly treated. CHBS made multiple attempts to contact the mother but received no response. CHBS closed its case on April 19, 2019.

- OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority II Investigation

Ms. Holland reported that her SoonerCare had lapsed, so she was not attending counseling. She was working on getting SoonerCare reinstated. On June 10, 2019, Ms. Holland reported that she was now working for the Oklahoma Blood Institute, and her children were attending a licensed daycare. She planned to move to Wilson, Oklahoma, to be with her new boyfriend. Ms. Holland was reportedly in high spirits and had a positive attitude toward her future. The home was observed to be clean. Ms. Holland mentioned that she was looking for better housing than Section 8 due to ongoing pest infestation. Despite not completing the CHBS program, Ms. Holland managed to care for her children properly.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding Regarding the Neglect-Threat of Harm in Sibling One and Sibling Two by Ms. Holland.

No deprived petition was requested.

Pertinent Report 5

On June 27, 2019, the fifth pertinent report was received by the OKDHS office in Carter County. A report was made regarding an OKDHS Family Support client, Victoria Holland, who had come into the OKDHS office to report that

she had moved to a new home owned by her boyfriend.

Ms. Holland reported that her boyfriend had been taking the children to daycare for her while she started a new medication (Seroquel) that made her extremely drowsy. The worker stepped out of the room and was later informed that the mother had been overheard smacking the children while the worker was gone. The mother was described as “sluggish,” with her temperament noticeably lower than usual. The worker questioned whether the medication was impairing her.

- OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority I Investigation.

Ms. Holland stated that she had told the worker the medication made her drowsy, but she had discontinued taking it. Ms. Holland moved from her boyfriend’s home into a family member’s residence. No marks were observed on Sibling Two.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding as to Abuse of Sibling Two by Ms. Holland.

No deprived petition was requested.

Pertinent Report 6

On July 13, 2022, the sixth pertinent report was received by the OKDHS office. It was reported that on July 12, 2022, the children were left home alone while their mother, Ms. Holland, was at a bar with friends. Ms. Holland did not return until 1 a.m. At that time, she had a seizure, and an ambulance was called. The friends who brought her home had another friend check on the children. The three-year-old (Sibling Three) was found sleeping on the couch without underwear, the one-year-old (Sibling Four) was crying in her bed, the five-month-old, Sky Holland, was crying in her bouncer, and the five-year-old (Sibling Two) and six-year-old (Sibling One) were watching television. It was reported that Ms. Holland had done this twice that week. Four days earlier, she had taken all the children to the pool except for the baby, Sky, who was left home alone. The mother was reported to drink heavily and to have bipolar disorder, manic depression, and other mental health issues. The home was deemed unfit for the children.

- OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority II Investigation to be initiated by July 17, 2022.

Ms. Holland denied the allegations. Sibling One reported being left home alone from time to time. The mother admitted to leaving the older two children at home while she ran to the corner store, but she stated they had phones, and she was never gone for long. Ms. Holland reported that she left a friend with her children when she went to the bar and became intoxicated. However, by the time the ambulance arrived, she was up and helping her friend with the children. The worker advised Ms. Holland that the children could not be left home alone and also discussed safe sleep practices. Ms. Holland acknowledged that she understood.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect-Inadequate Physical care and Neglect Threat of Harm by Victoria Holland to Sky, Siblings One, Sibling Two, Sibling Three, and Sibling Four.

OKDHS did not request court intervention at that time. Instead, OKDHS sent a referral to SafeCare and Lighthouse Behavioral Wellness Center. Ms. Holland was to participate and follow any recommendations made by the providers.

Pertinent Report 7

On July 15, 2022, the seventh pertinent report was received by the OKDHS office. An anonymous reporter stated they had been in the home one week earlier. It was reported that Ms. Holland had left the children home alone on July 9, 2022, with no adult supervision. Ms. Holland had left the children home alone on previous occasions as well. A video showed the five-month-old, Sky, screaming without a diaper. The home was described as filthy, with trash, debris, and clutter throughout. Roaches were present in the home. The kitchen was filled with dirty dishes and trash.

The reporter asked the six-year-old, Sibling One, where their mother, Ms. Holland, was, and Sibling One responded,

"I don't know." It was reported that Ms. Holland feeds the five-month-old Sky almond milk. When Ms. Holland was called, she said she would be home shortly but arrived two hours later. Another concern mentioned was that Sky, the five-month-old, had recently been hospitalized with Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

OKDHS screened out this report as a duplicate, noting: "Children 5 mos, 1, 3, 5 & 6 yo - with no delays or disabilities reported for the family – Duplicate Report to the open investigation - Ref 2248194. - LE [Law Enforcement] has not been contacted; the anonymous reporter cannot confirm the kids' condition today."

JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS PRIOR TO THE CHILD'S DEATH

The OJSO identified no relevant judicial proceedings prior to the death incident.