

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

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**Report Release Date: April 7, 2014**

**Review of the Near-Death of J.M.**

**of Okfuskee County, Oklahoma, and Cleveland County, Oklahoma**

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**General Information**

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request for a public report on January 8, 2014, related to the near-death of J.M. A Criminal Felony charge of Child Abuse by Injury and Child Neglect was filed by the Okfuskee County District Attorney's Office on August 23, 2013, against the biological mother, June Marie Couch. A Criminal Misdemeanor charge of Obstructing an Officer was filed on August 23, 2013, against June Marie Couch.

**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:	J.M.
Age at the time of the incident:	Eleven-months-old
Date of Near-death:	August 18, 2013
Person Responsible for the Child	June Marie Couch, biological mother

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

**Criminal Charges**

A Felony charge of Child Abuse by Injury and Child Neglect was filed in Okfuskee County, Oklahoma against June Marie Couch on August 23, 2013. A Misdemeanor charge of Obstructing an Officer was filed in Okfuskee County, Oklahoma against June Marie Couch on August 23, 2013.

## **Near-Death Incident**

The Near-Death report was received by Okfuskee County OKDHS on August 18, 2013. Reportedly, eleven-month-old J.M. presented to a hospital on August 18, 2013, in a near-death state. J.M. presented with a left depressed skull fracture, brain bleed, right fibula fracture, bruises on the neck, face, and shoulder. J.M. was transferred in from a rural hospital to a metropolitan Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) in critical condition. J.M. also was noted as being underweight; weighing nineteen pounds and was possible Failure to Thrive.

The OKDHS accepted this report as a Priority I Investigation. At the time of the near-death the mother June Marie Couch, her three children, another adult caretaker and their two children were living in the home. The adult caretaker denied knowing how the injuries occurred. J.M. was reported to cry all night by the children's accounts. One child in the home stated that they had observed the adult caretaker shaking J.M. by the head and J.M.'s legs were dangling. The child stated that the adult caretaker was mad when they shook J.M. The child stated that J.M. was bleeding from the ear and the caretaker had to put two band aids over the ear. Ms. Couch denied knowing how the injuries occurred. Ms. Couch reported three different incidents where the child had fallen. One fall was from a standing position beside the couch and the other two falls were from a sitting position. After the polygraph, Ms. Couch stated to the officer that she was frustrated on Saturday and she picked J.M. up from the walker and carried the child towards the bedroom. As Ms. Couch was entering the bedroom she "accidentally" hit J.M.'s head on the door frame. The case worker documented two collateral contacts that were interviewed who stated that they had observed Ms. Couch previously hitting the half-sibling in the head. The OKDHS Substantiated Threat of Harm on June Marie Couch as to all three children. The OKDHS Substantiated the Near-death finding as to June Marie Couch. The OKDHS Substantiated Shaking as to another adult living in the home. The OKDHS removed and placed J.M. and a half-sibling into Emergency Custody on August 18, 2013. The other half-sibling was placed with a relative. Another report was made in regard to the other adult caretaker and their children.

### Report to the OKDHS Alleging Abuse/Neglect (August 18, 2013)

The report was received by Okfuskee County OKDHS on August 18, 2013. This report was a companion report concerning J.M. who presented to a hospital in a near-death condition. At the time of the injuries, J.M. was living with the child's mother, two half-siblings, another adult and their two children. The family reported that they noticed the child's eye swelling around 5:30 a.m. The family reported that J.M. had thrown up three times the day before and once that day. The day before J.M. had ran a temperature of 100.8.

The OKDHS in Okfuskee County Screened-Out the report documenting duplicate report.

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

The following are the past reports that are pertinent to the near-death incident.

### Report to the OKDHS Alleging Abuse/Neglect (June 11, 2011)

The report was received on July 11, 2011, in Okfuskee County. Reportedly, June Marie Couch had two children; ages four and six years old. Another adult living in the home had allegedly hit the children on the back of their heads and on their cheeks with their hand. The adult had allegedly shoved Ms. Couch in front of the children.

The OKDHS Screened-Out the report documenting "Screen out due to no abuse or neglect reported. Family has CW history, however, no findings in which the children are at risk."

### Report to the OKDHS Alleging Abuse/Neglect (August 15, 2008)

The report was received on August 15, 2008, in Cleveland County. Reportedly, June Marie Couch was staying at a shelter and allegedly was witnessed abusing her one-year-old child. Ms. Couch yelled at her two children and used the "f" word. Ms. Couch's adult friend was alleged to beat and shake the baby. The reporter had allegedly witnessed Ms. Couch shake the baby. The reporter also alleged the one-year-old child was crying and Ms. Couch could not sleep and went to hit the child and the child turned and was hit by Ms. Couch in the face. There were no marks observed. This had been occurring for approximately a month.

The OKDHS accepted this as Priority II Assessment. The OKDHS documented that June Marie Couch was currently staying in a shelter and the children were handled appropriately. The OKDHS observed a small bruise on the forehead of the one-year-old where Ms. Couch said that the child had fallen and hit their head. The child was reported to be learning to walk. The OKDHS recommended that Ms. Couch attend parenting classes and have a drug assessment completed.

## **Judicial Proceedings prior to child's near-death**

The OJSO identified no judicial proceedings prior to the near-death incident which would be pertinent to this report.