

Office of Juvenile System Oversight

REVIEW OF THE NEAR DEATH OF A.T. MUSKOGEE COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

Report Release Date: April 3, 2024

OVERVIEW

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request for a case review regarding the near-death of A.T. On October 20, 2022, one felony count of Child Abuse was filed in Muskogee County against the biological mother, Stephanie Hughes. On April 18, 2023, Stephanie Hughes pled guilty to an amended charge of Felony Child Neglect. She received a three-year deferred sentence.

IDENTIFIERS

Child's Name:	Age at Time of Incident:	Date of Near-Death Incident:
A.T.	Three Years Old	September 1, 2022
Person Responsible for Child (PRFC):	Additional Identifiers:	
Stephanie Nicole Hughes	Sibling One: Twelve Months Old	

ACTIONS

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

The OJSO did not become aware of this case until after the near death of A.T.

NEAR-DEATH INCIDENT

On September 1, 2022, OKDHS was contacted by an emergency room (E.R.) physician when three-year-old A.T. presented in critical condition after reportedly having a seizure at home.

Per documentation provided by OKDHS, "Stephanie Hughes and her husband reported A.T. to be running through the living room at around midnight and was not running straight." Ms. Hughes left the living room for approximately three minutes and returned to find A.T. on the floor having a seizure. Ms. Hughes reported that her husband placed A.T. on the couch and called 911.

It was further documented that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrived and transported A.T. to the local hospital. In critical condition, A.T. was later transported to a larger hospital.

OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority I investigation to be initiated by September 1, 2022. On the same day, OKDHS initiated contact with the child and family.

INVESTIGATION

Per OKDHS documentation, Ms. Hughes was interviewed by law enforcement. During the interview, Ms. Hughes stated that she gave A.T. Benadryl® pills because A.T. was showing signs of allergy symptoms. Ms. Hughes stated she gave A.T. adult-strength Benadryl®, noting that she did not know there was a children's dosage of Benadryl®. Ms. Hughes admitted that whenever the children had allergy problems, she gave them the children's dosage of Zyrtec®.

OKDHS further documented that hospital staff and law enforcement indicated that, based on Ms. Hughes' statement, she gave the children the adult-strength Benadryl® to get them to sleep during the night. Medical personnel stated that A.T. had overdosed on Benadryl®, which can cause tremors and can be interpreted as seizures.

- OKDHS made a Substantiated Finding of Neglect/Near Death of A.T. by the biological mother, Stephanie Hughes.
- OKDHS made a Substantiated Finding of Neglect/Threat of Harm to Sibling One by Stephanie Hughes.
- OKDHS recommended that the family enroll in a Family-Centered Service (FCS) case with Comprehensive Home-Based Services (CHBS), counseling, and other medical and mental health services. OKDHS documented the family enrolled in the FCS case with CHBS.
- To work the services that were recommended, OKDHS went to Ms. Hughes' criminal court proceedings to assist with her release on bond.

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

Pertinent Investigation:

The persons interviewed during the investigation include the biological parents, medical professionals, and various third parties.

On September 28, 2017, OKDHS received a report that newborn Christopher Tobin was in possible danger of being neglected by his mother, Stephanie Hughes.

OKDHS documented that it was indicated by hospital staff that Ms. Hughes was disengaged in the care of Christopher, and she appeared not to fully comprehend what was being told to her regarding the child's care. It was further documented that Ms. Hughes had epilepsy and was not taking her medication.

- The report was accepted as a Priority Two Investigation, to be initiated by October 2, 2017.

On October 2, 2017, OKDHS initiated contact with the family.

During the investigation conducted by OKDHS, it was documented that there were concerns about Christopher's persistent diaper rash. OKDHS contacted the family multiple times to check up on the diaper rash as well as the child's care.

On November 18, 2017, OKDHS documented that after they awakened, Christopher's parents found him unresponsive. The parents transported Christopher to the county hospital, where he was later pronounced deceased.

During interviews with OKDHS, the parents admitted that Christopher slept in the same bed as them while using a "boppy" pillow.

The medical examiner's report indicated that Christopher's cause of death was Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and that a significant condition was unsafe sleep arrangement (co-sleeping in an adult bed with two adults; supine on a pillow). The report also classified the manner of death as being undetermined.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect/Threat of Harm to Christopher Tobin as to Stephanie

Hughes.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect/Death of Christopher Tobin as to Ms. Hughes and the biological father.
- OKDHS recommended that CHBS be implemented in the home, which the family accepted.

JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS PRIOR TO THE CHILD'S NEAR-DEATH

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