

## Office of Juvenile System Oversight

# REVIEW OF THE NEAR DEATH OF G.F. CLEVELAND COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

Report Release Date: June 26, 2024

## OVERVIEW

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request to conduct a case review concerning the near-death of one-month-old G.F. On March 31, 2023, the biological mother, Victoria Bolton, was charged with felony Child Neglect by the Cleveland County District Attorney. The next hearing has been continued until August 19, 2024. On April 17, 2023, the biological mother's roommate, Lisa Gould, was charged with felony Child Neglect by the Cleveland County District Attorney. On August 29, 2023, Lisa Gould was convicted of Child Neglect and sentenced to a twenty-year term with fifteen years to be served in the Department of Corrections and five years to be served out on probation.

## IDENTIFIERS

Child's Name:	Age at Time of Incident:	Date of Near-Death Incident:
G.F.	One Month Old	March 12, 2023
Person Responsible for Child (PRFC):	Additional Identifiers:	
Victoria Bolton Lisa Gould	None	

## 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 Title 10A § 1-6-105H.

The OJSO did not become aware of this case until after the near-death incident of G.F.

## NEAR-DEATH INCIDENT

On March 12, 2023, a near-death report was received by the OKDHS office in Cleveland County. The biological mother, Victoria Bolton, and the newborn baby, G.F., were reported to have tested positive for methamphetamines at the birth of G.F.

It was indicated to OKDHS that at the birth of G.F., the biological mother and G.F. tested positive for methamphetamines. It was believed that the mother was still using drugs. It was reported that OKDHS opened a case at that time. The mother and G.F. were discharged from the hospital to Lisa Gould's home with OKDHS approval. Lisa Gould was to assist the mother in caring for G.F.

Later in the report to OKDHS, it was noted that the family had not taken G.F. to the doctor. G.F. looked sick and reportedly had diarrhea and a fever for four to five days. The reporter saw pictures of G.F., and G.F. appeared to be

very small and looked like a newborn.

- OKDHS accepted the report as a Priority I Investigation.

## INVESTIGATION

The persons interviewed during the investigation included the biological mother, Victoria Bolton, Lisa Gould, the mother's roommate, and various third parties.

On March 12, 2023, it was documented by OKDHS that an OKDHS worker went to the home and observed G.F. during a diaper change. G.F. was reported to be very small and fit into preemie clothes. When the mother laid G.F. down, G.F. had trouble breathing. The OKDHS worker instructed the mother to take G.F. to the Emergency Room to be evaluated immediately. Ms. Bolton stated they would take the G.F. as soon as the worker left. Ms. Bolton took G.F. to the local hospital.

The OKDHS worker documented being told by the mother that G.F. was being admitted to the hospital. The OKDHS worker spoke with the primary medical doctor, who reported that G.F. was at the hospital and in critical condition. The doctor stated, "If [G.F.] had not come to the E.R. last night, [G.F.] would have died very soon." The doctor described G.F.'s appearance to be "emaciated." The doctor reported that G.F. had "Acute Respiratory Failure. Normally, when a child has that, they have a virus like bronchitis or pneumonia. G.F. does not have a virus. G.F. is just malnourished."

OKDHS documentation stated that the doctor reported that the nurses heard the mother tell G.F., "Why are you crying? You don't have tears. Nothing is wrong, stop crying." Nurses observed the mother bring a bottle for G.F. The investigation noted a third party stating, "If it was formula, it was highly diluted. It was basically clear." Per OKDHS documentation, G.F. struggled to breathe, and G.F.'s body worked too hard. G.F. was diagnosed as Failure to Thrive. The doctor stated, "When [G.F.] was discharged six weeks ago, [G.F.] weighed 2.8 kg, and upon re-admission, six weeks later, [G.F.] only weighed 3.1kg. The doctor reported that means [G.F.] was gaining around 4 grams daily when a baby should be gaining around 30 grams daily.

The medical staff was concerned for G.F. at that time and believed the child should be removed.

OKDHS called the local Sheriff's office to make a report. A detective reported they were already speaking with the mother and family at the hospital. The detective reported they would probably be arresting the mother. Victoria Bolton was arrested later that day on March 12, 2023.

- G.F. was placed in the Police Protective custody on March 12, 2023.
- G.F. was placed in the temporary custody of OKDHS on March 14, 2023.

G.F. was in critical condition due to being malnourished and was diagnosed as Failure to Thrive. OKDHS became involved with the family regarding Neglect-Threat of Harm (Substance Abuse) allegations. Third parties mentioned concerns, but the OKDHS documented there was no proof of substance abuse occurring, and both Victoria Bolton and Lisa Gould denied substance use.

- OKDHS added allegations of Neglect-Near Death after G.F. was taken to the hospital and admitted in critical condition.
- OKDHS made a Substantiated Finding of Neglect/Near-Death Failure to Thrive as to Victoria Bolton and her roommate Lisa Gould on G.F.
- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect-Threat of Harm (Substance Abuse) as to Victoria Bolton and her roommate, Lisa Gould.
- OKDHS recommended a deprived petition be filed on behalf of G.F.
- OKDHS requested a Heinous and Shocking petition be filed in this case with immediate termination of parental rights.

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

### Pertinent Investigation 1:

On January 20, 2023, OKDHS received its first report on the biological mother, Victoria Bolton. The mother and the alleged father were sleeping at a night shelter. The mother told the reporter that during the day, she lived in a tent behind a dumpster and that the family didn't have a bed, car seat, or a place to put a baby bed. OKDHS documentation indicated that five months earlier, while she was pregnant, the mother tested positive for amphetamines. The mother tested negative at the birth of G.F., and G.F. did not show any signs of withdrawal. G.F.'s umbilical cord was sent off to be tested. G.F. weighed 5 pounds 15 ounces and was delivered at 41 weeks gestation. Very little prenatal care was reported by the family.

- OKDHS accepted this report as a Priority I investigation.

On January 20, 2023, OKDHS documented observing G.F. During the visit, OKDHS spoke with a nurse who did not feel comfortable discharging G.F. to the mother due to unsafe conditions. The nurse reported the mother, Victoria Bolton, indicated she would drop G.F. off at a fire station.

On January 24, 2023, OKDHS spoke with a doctor who reported they did not feel safe sending G.F. home. When asked why, the doctor did not state his concerns. Later, the doctor told the worker that their concern was that the parents had been making the bottles wrong, which could kill G.F. The family reported knowing how to make a bottle now properly. The doctor reported the parents were educated at discharge and should know how to make a bottle. The doctor asked to speak with the OKDHS supervisor. The supervisor agreed with the OKDHS worker that since the parents had been educated on making a bottle, there should be no problems. The doctor was upset, stating that the parents had previously been trained to make bottles.

On January 27, 2023, a Child Safety Meeting was held with the family. Victoria Bolton admitted to using meth in the past but reported stopping when pregnant. Ms. Bolton stated she was around people who were using, so she tested positive early on. Ms. Bolton stated she was unaware she was making bottles incorrectly but gets it now. Ms. Bolton reported that she and G.F. will live with her aunt, Lisa Gould. Ms. Gould stated she was unaware the family was homeless, or Ms. Bolton would have been with her longer. Ms. Gould reported that she helped raise Ms. Bolton and will be here for her. It was documented that Ms. Gould will continue to help make bottles and will continue to work with the family. The alleged father denied using meth. He reported a misunderstanding, but they got that figured out, and things are improving.

On February 2, 2023, OKDHS contacted the mother's roommate, Lisa Gould, about missing a doctor's appointment on February 1, 2023. Lisa Gould was supposed to assist the mother in caring for G.F. Ms. Gould reported they had a death in the family but have rescheduled the appointment for February 13, 2023.

On February 13, 2023, Ms. Gould reported they were at the appointment, but the doctor's office refused to see G.F. because Ms. Gould didn't have guardianship papers. The worker reported that Ms. Gould could give the nurse the worker's number and that they could call if needed.

- OKDHS made an Unsubstantiated Finding of Neglect-Threat of Harm-Substance Exposed Newborn and Neglect-Threat of Harm due to a lack of evidence that G.F. was exposed to substances and there is a threat of harm.
- The allegations Neglect-Failure to Provide Adequate Nutrition by Victoria Bolton and the alleged father were substantiated.
- Court intervention is not being requested as no safety threat was found, and a safe, protective adult was in the home.
- No deprived petition was recommended. CHBS will be in the home.

### Pertinent Investigation 2:

On January 24, 2023, OKDHS received a report on the family that the biological mother, Victoria Bolton, and the alleged father are homeless and might be staying at a shelter. OKDHS documentation indicated Ms. Bolton took G.F. to see a pediatrician, and the lab work was abnormal. The pediatrician sent G.F. to the emergency room (E.R.)

to be looked at further. The E.R. reported that G.F. appeared to be delayed and lethargic. G.F. was also reported to be small, malnourished, and have low blood cells. G.F. was stable and needed IV fluids. Ms. Bolton reported she used meth during her pregnancy.

OKDHS documentation continued to indicate that Ms. Bolton was supposed to feed G.F. 2-5 scoops of formula for every 5 ounces of water. Ms. Bolton reported using 1.5 scoops for every 5 ounces instead but was unsure when she was using breast milk or if she was using formula for G.F. Ms. Bolton was also uncertain about the kind of formula she used and did not wake up to feed G.F. at night. The reporter did not know where Ms. Bolton and G.F. would go if discharged. Ms. Bolton reported that her aunt (Lisa Gould) was her guardian. The OKDHS documented that an OKDHS worker called to check on G.F. and was advised that G.F. was admitted and had a room. The charge nurse stated that G.F. was in stable condition. OKDHS did not accept this report for investigation.

The OKDHS screened out this report with allegations to be addressed in the current open report received on January 20, 2023. The report received on January 20, 2023, remained open. OKDHS documented that the report being screened out meets Priority I Investigation guidelines and will have to be addressed as such in the open report.

- This report was received on January 24, 2023, at 6:27 p.m.
- The OJSO verified that OKDHS did contact the family on January 24, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.
- The OKDHS worker contacted the family the next day, January 25, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.
- OKDHS informed the family of the Family Team Meeting they would have on January 27, 2023.

#### **Pertinent Investigation 4:**

On February 1, 2023, OKDHS received a report on the family. Ms. Bolton and G.F. were discharged from the hospital, but there were issues with the formula, so they were readmitted and discharged again. Ms. Bolton missed an appointment with G.F. for a two-week follow-up. Ms. Bolton called and canceled due to the weather. They were supposed to attend an appointment today but were a “no-show and no-call.” The reporter was aware of the open case and called to inform OKDHS of the missed appointment.

OKDHS screened out the report, documenting an email sent to the worker and supervisor with an open investigation with the family. OKDHS was informed of the missed appointment.

On February 2, 2023, the worker called and spoke with Lisa Gould. Ms. Gould reported they did call and reschedule the appointment for February 13, 2023. Ms. Gould reported they had a death in the family, so the appointment was missed, and they will not miss the next appointment.

#### **Pertinent investigation 5:**

Lisa Gould had her children removed by OKDHS for the first time on January 20, 2000, through January 26, 2001. Her children were removed a second time on March 10, 2010, through December 7, 2012.

## **JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS PRIOR TO THE CHILD’S NEAR-DEATH**

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

Lisa Gould had a traffic charge in TR-2023-446 on February 21, 2023, for Driving Under Suspension. This charge was dismissed on August 20, 2023. It may be relevant because Ms. Gould couldn’t legally transport the mother and G.F. to their regular doctor appointments. However, whether this charge hindered Ms. Gould from taking the family to doctor visits was never clarified.