

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE



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PRESS RELEASE

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In accordance with state law, R.I.G.L. § 42-73-2.3, enacted on July 6, 2016, the Office of the Child Advocate must convene a review panel after notification by the Department of Children, Youth and Families of a child fatality or near fatality reported to DCYF. The Office of the Child Advocate (“OCA”) is issuing this press release pursuant to *R.I.G.L. § 42-73-2.3* to announce that the OCA has re-convened the Child Fatality Review Panel to review the fatalities of four (4) children and the near fatalities of nine (9) children, ages ranging from four (4) months to seventeen (17) years old. Six (6) of these children and families had no prior involvement with the Department. The Office of the Child Advocate is tasked with the responsibility of reviewing any child fatality or near fatality in the following circumstances: 1) The fatality or near fatality occurs while in the custody of, or involved with, the department, or if the child's family previously received services from the department; (2) The fatality or near fatality is alleged to be from abuse or neglect of the child; or (3) A sibling, household member, or day care provider has been the subject of a child abuse and neglect investigation within the previous twelve (12) months, including, without limitation, cases in which the report was unsubstantiated or the investigation is currently pending where a child was in the care and custody of the Department of Children, Youth and Families or the child’s family had recent contact with the Department of Children, Youth and Families.

The State’s Child Advocate, Jennifer Griffith, has appointed a panel of six community professionals to conduct a multidisciplinary review of these cases. Griffith has asked the following individuals from a previous review panel to return to the newly convened group: Dr. Adam Pallant, a pediatrician; Ken Fandetti, a retired DCYF administrator; and Darlene Allen, Executive Director of Adoption Rhode Island; Attorney Molly Kapstein Cote, a former Attorney General and a criminal defense

attorney; Lisa Guillette, Executive Director of Foster Forward and Detective Michael Iacone, a Cranston Special Victims Unit Detective. In addition to the six community members, Griffith, along with three members of her staff, Assistant Child Advocate, Katelyn Medeiros; Special Projects Coordinator, Kathryn Cortes; and Staff Attorney, Diana Robbins, will serve as advising members of the review panel. Upon the conclusion of the review, the Office of the Child Advocate will issue a public report outlining the panel's findings and recommendations, without identifying the children or families involved in the cases under review.