

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



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PRESS RELEASE

For Release on November 30, 2017

The Office of the Child Advocate is issuing this press release pursuant to *R.I.G.L § 42-73-2.3*. The Office of the Child Advocate is an independent, autonomous state agency tasked with the immense responsibility of protecting the legal rights of children involved with the Department of Children, Youth and Families, to promote policies and practices, which ensure that children are safe, that children have permanent and stable families, and that children in out of home placements have their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral needs met. The Office of the Child Advocate functions as the watchdog to the Department of Children, Youth and Families.

On April 5, 2017, the State's Child Advocate, Jennifer Griffith, announced that she convened her second panel of community professionals to conduct a multidisciplinary review of the near fatality of a three (3) month old child and another near fatality of a five (5) month old child. This review was expanded upon twice to include the fatality of a three (3) month old child, who was open to the Department of Children, Youth and Families at the time of their death and the near fatality of a two (2) year old child. The Office of the Child Advocate (hereinafter "OCA") is tasked with the responsibility of reviewing any child fatality or near fatality 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 (hereinafter "DCYF" or "Department"). The OCA may also complete a review of a fatality or near fatality when 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. Furthermore, the OCA may review a child fatality or near fatality when it is alleged to be the result of abuse or neglect.

The panel is in the process of reviewing the records for each of these four (4) cases and developing a comprehensive report.

The OCA is issuing this press release to make the unfortunate announcement that one of the near fatality cases under review has been upgraded to a child fatality due to the death of child. Furthermore, the Office of the Child Advocate has expanded the review to include the near fatality of a two (2) month old and the near fatality of a newborn child. The review now consists of a total of two (2) child fatalities and four (4) near fatalities.

The OCA will proceed with this review and will issue a public report outlining the panel's findings and recommendations before the end of the year, without identifying the children or families involved in the cases under review.