

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

---

**Report Release Date: February 26, 2008**

**Review of the Death of Cameron Guthrie  
of Cherokee County, Oklahoma**

**Dates and Outcome of Investigations and Actions Taken by the  
Department of Human Services; Actions Taken by the District  
Attorney; Dates and Summary of Judicial Proceedings; and Rulings  
of the Court**

---

**General Information**

On January 28, 2008, the Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) received a request for a public report on the death of Cameron R. Guthrie. The two-month-old baby died on September 15, 2006. At that time, the biological mother reported to authorities that she had put Cameron down for a nap, and when she checked on her about an hour later, the child was unresponsive. It was also reported that there were no signs of trauma to the child and the medical examiner first ruled the death consistent with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The biological father, several months later, confessed to placing a couch cushion over Cameron, causing her to quit breathing, while the mother watched. The medical examiner amended his report to reflect the cause of death as Asphyxiation by compression of the chest and abdomen. In the amended medical examiner's report, the findings described and previously characterized consistent with SIDS were also consistent with asphyxiation by compression of the chest and abdomen. A criminal felony First Degree Murder charge was filed on the biological father, Mathew Guthrie, on October 31, 2007. The district attorney's office filed a criminal felony charge of Enabling Child Abuse by Injury against the biological mother, Brandy Hurta, on February 14, 2008. The following is a summary of the actions taken by the Department of Human Services (DHS); the actions taken by the district attorney; judicial proceedings; and the rulings of the court, as authorized by 10 O.S., Section 7005-1.9, D and E (below).

**Authorization**

Title 10, Section 7005-1.9, D and E, of the Oklahoma Statutes, states:

D. 1. At any time subsequent to seven (7) days, but no more than thirty (30) days, of the date the person responsible for the child has been criminally charged, the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth shall, upon request, release certain information to the public as follows:

a. a confirmation shall be provided by the Commission as to whether a report of suspected child abuse or neglect has been made concerning the alleged victim or other children while living in the same household and whether an investigation has begun,

b. confirmation shall be provided by the Commission as to whether previous reports of suspected child abuse or neglect have been made and the dates thereof, a summary of those previous reports, the dates and outcome of any investigations or actions taken by the Department [DHS] and the Commission in response to any previous report of child abuse or neglect, and the specific recommendation made to the district attorney and any subsequent action taken by the district attorney,

c. the dates of any judicial proceedings prior to the death or near death of the child,

d. recommendations submitted by the Department [DHS] and the Commission shall be provided in writing including recommendations made at the hearing as they relate to custody or placement of a child, and

e. the rulings of the court.

2. Specific recommendations made by the Commission described in any progress reports of a pending case submitted to the court may be disclosed by the Commission.

E. Any disclosure of information pursuant to this section shall not identify or provide an identifying description of any complainant or reporter of child abuse or neglect, and shall not identify the name of the child victim's siblings or other children living in the same household, the parent or other person responsible for the child or any other member of the household, other than the person criminally charged.

**Identifiers:**

Child's Name: Cameron R. Guthrie  
Date of Birth: July 2, 2006

Alleged Perpetrators: Mathew R. Guthrie  
Brandy Hurta

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth became aware of this case after the child's death.

## **Summary of Actions Taken by the Department of Human Services; Action Taken by the District Attorney; Judicial Proceedings; and the Rulings of the Court:**

The OJSO reviewed the DHS child welfare history on the family that occurred prior to the child's death. The DHS had documented two referrals regarding the biological family.

### Referral 1 (August 2, 2006)

The DHS received the first referral regarding the family on August 2, 2006, alleging Brandy Hurta and her boyfriend, Mathew Guthrie, had lost custody of their two children in the state of Texas for abuse and neglect. According to DHS documentation, the parental rights to the children had been terminated and the children were adopted by the maternal grandparents, due to failure on the part of the parents to complete their treatment plan. The reporter alleged the mother was pregnant and the State of Texas planned to remove the newborn from the parents' care at birth. Reportedly, Hurta and Guthrie fled Texas in order to keep the newborn. The caller stated the baby was born on July 2, 2006, in Oklahoma. The DHS documentation stated that Guthrie was the biological father to all three children, and that he was married to another woman, with whom he had a child, also. The caller feared for the newborn's safety and stated that Hurta presented herself well, acted like a good mother, and would say all the right things when people were watching her actions.

The reporter also alleged that Hurta and Guthrie's first two children were removed from their care because the home was unsanitary, the children were left in dirty diapers, and people of questionable character (a child molester, drug addicts, and alcoholics) were allowed to visit the home. Reportedly, both parents had alcohol and drug problems and Hurta had tried to hurt herself. According to DHS documentation, Hurta would not feed her children in the past, because she feared they would become overweight.

The referral was assigned as a Priority I assessment\* and was initiated on August 2, 2006, with both Hurta and Guthrie. The DHS documented in KIDS (child welfare information system) a failed attempt to verify out-of-state records regarding the family. The DHS case file contained a faxed copy, dated August 4, 2006, of an order by the State of Texas appointing the maternal grandparents as non-parent sole managing conservators of both children.

\* DHS policy categorizes an assessment as being conducted when a report of abuse or neglect does not constitute a serious or immediate threat to the child's health or safety.

The DHS documented that the worker met with the family in their residence on August 2, 2006. According to DHS documentation, the worker observed the home to be clean and there appeared to be plenty of food. Hurta and Guthrie both denied using drugs or letting anyone who used drugs visit their home. The DHS documented that both stated that Cameron was well taken care of and was fed when she was hungry and that they were trying to regain custody of their other two children. According to DHS documentation, the worker advised the family to ensure Cameron received all of her well baby check-ups and immunizations and informed the family of resources should they need help with food or utilities. The DHS documented that no further actions appeared warranted.

#### Referral 2 (September 15, 2006)

The DHS received the second referral regarding the family on September 15, 2006, reporting the death of Cameron Guthrie. The caller reported Hurta stated she had put Cameron down for a nap on her side and when she checked on her forty-five minutes later, Cameron was unresponsive. An emergency medical unit that was called to the home tried to revive the baby. Cameron was pronounced dead at the hospital. The caller reported that Cameron had no visible signs of trauma. The caller also reported that Cameron was current with her immunizations from her two-month check up. The caller stated the child died of SIDS.

The referral was assigned as a Priority I investigation. DHS documented a failed attempt to interview both parents on September 15, 2006; a home visit with both parents was documented as occurring on September 18, 2006. The DHS documentation stated that Cameron was pronounced deceased on September 15, 2006, at the hospital. According to DHS documentation, the mother reported that she laid Cameron down for a nap around 1:00 p.m., and that around 2:00 p.m. when she went to get Cameron, she found Cameron not breathing. Reportedly, Hurta ran outside to get Guthrie and he called 911. On January 25, 2007, the medical examiner ruled the cause of death as SIDS, and the manner of death was categorized as natural. DHS made a finding of Services Recommended for grief counseling for Hurta and Guthrie. No court action was requested.

#### DHS requested to reopen case (March 7, 2007)

The DHS documented on March 7, 2007, that new information had been received and law enforcement had reopened their criminal investigation regarding Cameron's death.

DHS case closure (June 12, 2007)

The DHS worker requested that the case be closed, due to the recommendations from the DHS State Office.

Medical examiner's amended autopsy report (October 8, 2007)

The medical examiner's office was made aware of Guthrie's confession of suffocating Cameron and changed its finding to the cause of death as Asphyxiation by compression of the chest and abdomen. The manner of death was then ruled as a homicide.

Criminal charge filed on biological father (October 31, 2007)

The Cherokee County District Attorney filed a First Degree Murder charge against Guthrie on October 31, 2007.

DHS reopened case (November 2, 2007)

The DHS reopened its case as Cameron's death was now being classified as a homicide and the father had been arrested.

DHS case closure (November 29, 2007)

The DHS documented new information entered for the investigation. The findings and the district attorney's report were changed to reflect the new information. The DHS changed its finding to Confirmed-Court Intervention requested. The family has no other children living with them at this time.

Criminal charge filed on biological mother (February 14, 2008)

The Cherokee County District Attorney filed a criminal felony charge of Enabling Child Abuse by Injury against Hurta on February 14, 2008.