

**Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth
Office of Juvenile System Oversight**

Report Release Date: May 16, 2008

**Review of the Death of Skyler Roininen
Of Tulsa 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 March 31, 2008, the Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) was made aware of the death of Skyler Roininen, a twenty-three month old who was transported on March 27, 2008, by ambulance, to the hospital because he was not breathing. He later died on March 28, 2008, as a result of a severe head injury. Criminal felony First Degree Murder charges were filed on the father's girlfriend, Ashley Parnell, on April 7, 2008. The following is a summary of the actions taken by the Department of Human Services (DHS); the actions taken by the district attorney's office; judicial proceedings; and 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: Skyler Roininen
Date of Birth: April 24, 2006
Alleged Perpetrator: Ashley Parnell

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. The DHS had documented four referrals involving Skyler.

Referral 1 (August 31, 2006)

The DHS received the first referral regarding Skyler on August 31, 2006, alleging that when Skyler came home from visitation with his biological mother, he had a cigarette burn to the right side of his head. The reporter also alleged that Skyler's mother and father were having a custody dispute over Skyler.

DHS assigned this referral as a Priority 3, with a two-day response time. DHS visited the father's home on August 31, 2006, and documented that Skyler had "an aspirin sized singe mark in the child's hair on the right back side of his head." DHS did not find any other signs of physical abuse to Sklyer on this date. DHS made a finding of Services Recommended and also documented "It appears that the father of Skyler is protecting at this time and no child welfare

services are needed.” DHS also documented, “if the situation changes regarding custody of Skyler, child welfare would need to become involved immediately.”

Referral 2 (February 19, 2008)

The DHS received the second referral on Skyler on February 19, 2008. This referral alleged that Skyler presented to a medical clinic on February 16, 2008, for treatment, and was referred to a specialist on February 18, 2008, due to suffering a proximal humerus fracture of the arm. The reporter stated that this was an unusual fracture in that the break was to the upper arm, near the shoulder. The parents could not say how the injury occurred.

This referral was assigned as a Priority 1 due to the injury of the child. According to DHS documentation, the DHS worker went to Skyler’s home on February 19, 2008, at 3:45 pm and also at 5:00 pm and was unable to make contact with the family. The DHS worker left a letter at the home asking the parents to contact DHS.

The DHS worker on February 19, 2008, at 3:40 pm contacted the physician who first treated Skyler’s injury, and he reported, “the injury was suspicious but he was not sure if the injury was a result of abuse.”

On February 20, 2008, at 9:15 am the DHS worker also left a voice message on the father’s cell phone asking him to contact DHS, and documented that she made unsuccessful attempts to phone the home and other phone numbers provided to DHS.

The DHS worker reported she spoke to Skyler’s father by phone on February 20, 2008, who agreed to bring Skyler to the Tulsa Justice Center on the morning of February 21, 2008, to be examined by a physician. The DHS worker documented on February 21, 2008, that the physician at Tulsa Justice Center postponed Skyler’s exam until they could review the previous x-rays of the injury. (According to the DHS record, there was a delay in the physician at the Tulsa Justice Center receiving Skyler’s x-ray. The DHS worker documented that she had been told the orthopedic doctor’s office had mailed them and did not learn until March 5, 2008, that they hadn’t been mailed. DHS made arrangements to pick up the x-rays and take them to the physician at the Tulsa Justice Center.)

Ashley Parnell contacted the DHS worker by phone on February 20, 2008, at 10:00 am. She stated that Skyler’s father had asked her to contact DHS on his behalf. She stated to the worker that she did not know how Skyler hurt his arm and indicated that maybe he fell off the stairs. She stated, however, that she did not witness him falling down the stairs.

According to the DHS record, on March 5, 2008, at 1:00 pm the physician at the Tulsa Justice Center did review the x-rays and reported to the DHS worker and

DHS documented, "the injury is concerning because there is no history given of how it occurred." DHS also documented that the physician stated, "it could have occurred from Skyler falling off the stairs, however, she would not be able to say for sure how he received the injury just by looking at the x-rays."

On March 6, 2008, at 10:00 am the DHS worker documented that she made phone contact with Skyler's paternal grandmother who said she would give Skyler's father the message to contact the DHS worker.

On March 13, 2008, at 3:00 pm, the DHS worker documented that she went to Skyler's daycare and observed Skyler playing in a swing, and also documented that he had a bandage on his arm. He was not interviewed by the DHS worker due to his age.

On March 26, 2008, at 2:00 pm the DHS worker documented she made contact by phone with Skyler's father to set up a visit at his home. The father reported that he and Skyler were living with his mother. The home visit was scheduled for the following Monday, March 31, 2008, at 4:30 pm.

Referral 3 (March 27, 2008)

The DHS received the third referral regarding Skyler on this date at 8:40 am. The reporter alleged that Skyler had been admitted to a hospital with multiple massive bi-lateral retinal hemorrhages, was on a ventilator and it was questionable if he would make it. Skyler's father reportedly said that when Skyler woke up this morning that he was fussy but he did not identify anything that would have caused this injury. DHS accepted this referral for investigation and assigned it as a Priority One.

On March 27, 2008, at 10:45 am the DHS worker documented that she interviewed Skyler's biological mother at the hospital. The mother reported that the father had contacted her on this date and said that Skyler had been taken to the hospital and was on life support. She also reported that the father had not brought Skyler to her the past week for visitation. She stated that she had witnessed bruising to Skyler previously and when asked, the father would always say, "Skyler fell."

Emergency Custody (March 27, 2008)

Ashley Parnell's son was placed in emergency custody by Jenks Police Department due to the fact that all of the adult members of the household were being considered as persons of interest in Skyler's death.

Referral 4 (March 27, 2008)

A fourth referral was received on March 27, 2008, at 11:49 am. This referral alleged that a five-year-old child, who had been living in the same household as

Skyler, had been placed in police protective custody due to the injuries Skyler had sustained. This referral was assigned as a Priority One, and associated to the previous referral received at 8:40 am.

On March 27, 2008, at 3:00 pm the DHS worker obtained a copy of Skyler's medical evaluation (regarding Referral 2) from the orthopedic specialist who also had treated Skyler, and the physician documented, "the injury was not particularly suspicious and could be consistent with a fall that may not have been witnessed."

Death of Skyler Roininen (March 28, 2008)

Skyler died on March 28, 2008, as a result of a head injury.

DHS Worker Visits Skyler's Home (April 1, 2008)

The DHS worker documented that she went to the home to complete the home visit on this date, in reference to Skyler's broken arm in Referral 2 . According to the DHS record, Skyler's father reported to DHS that he never witnessed Skyler falling and doesn't know of an event that could have caused the injury. He also confirmed that he had been living with his mother but within the past two weeks had started staying at Ashley Parnell's.

The DHS worker also interviewed Skyler's paternal grandmother who reported that she did not observe Skyler fall down her stairs and she was unsure how he obtained the injury.

Filing of Criminal Charges (April 7, 2008)

The Tulsa County District Attorney filed one count of felony First Degree Murder against Ashley Parnell.

DHS Closed Referral 2 (April 7, 2008)

In reference to Skyler's broken arm, DHS initially made a finding of Confirm-Services Recommended as to Lack of Supervision. DHS also recommended that the parents adequately supervise their children in order to prevent injuries in the future. No deprived petition was requested at this time and referral 2 was closed.

DHS Closed Referral 4 (April 8, 2008)

DHS closed Referral 4 on this date with a finding of Confirmed-Court Intervention Requested. The DHS recommended a deprived petition be filed on behalf of Ashley Parnell's son.

DHS Reopens Referral 2 (April 11, 2008)

DHS records reflect that Referral 2 was reopened by DHS due to “child death associated with this referral, new information received states Ms. Parnell was a PRFC (Person Responsible For the Child) and not a collateral.”

DHS Closed Referral 2 (April 28, 2008)

DHS closed Referral 2 on this date with a final finding of Services Recommended and no deprived petition was requested. The report to the District Attorney stated, “Ms. Parnell was initially listed as a collateral and therefore was not interviewed face to face. Mr. Roininen and Ms. Parnell initially denied cohabitating, however through the course of the investigation it became known that Ms. Parnell was a PRFC.”

Referral 3 remains open according to DHS records.