

Child Fatality Summary

Child's Name: Tariji Gordon

County: Seminole

Date of Birth: 03/06/2011

Date of Death: 02/06/2014

Report Number: 2014-036591

Family Composition Chart

Name	Age at Time of the Incident	Relationship with Deceased Child
Tariji Gordon	2 years	Decedent
[REDACTED]	3 years	Sibling
[REDACTED]	4 years	Sibling
[REDACTED]	7 years	Sibling
[REDACTED]	10 years	Sibling – Parental Rights Surrendered; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	12 years	Sibling – Parental Rights Surrendered; [REDACTED]
Rachel Fryer	32 years	Mother to the Gordon and [REDACTED] Children
Timothy Gordon, Jr.	28 years	Father to the Gordon children

Circumstances Surrounding Death

On February 12, 2014, Tariji's body was found in a suitcase that had been buried in Putnam County, Florida. At the time of her death, Tariji was in the legal custody of her mother, Rachel Fryer, pursuant to a court ordered reunification which occurred on November 17, 2013. Tariji's siblings, [REDACTED] also resided in the home. All four children were receiving post placement supervision services at the time. Direct in-home case management services, as well as in home family support services were being provided.

One day prior to the discovery of Tariji's body, Rachel Fryer was arrested for Aggravated Child Neglect as Tariji's whereabouts were allegedly unknown. The autopsy results released on February 26th indicated that Tariji died of blunt force trauma to the head.

On February 11, 2014, Rachel Fryer was arrested and charged with Aggravated Child Neglect, First Degree Murder, Tamper with Evidence, and Mishandle Dead Human Body Remains. As of this writing, she is being held without bond in the Seminole County Jail.

Rachel Fryer was interviewed by the Sanford Police Department and provided the following details surrounding Tariji's death.

On the morning of February 6, 2014, the mother went to wake up Tariji, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had already left for school. The mother found Tariji unresponsive. The mother stated Tariji took a deep breath and exhaled, but showed no other signs of life. The mother attempted to revive Tariji by conducting Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and applying Tariji's breathing treatments for her asthma. She attempted to revive Tariji for approximately thirty minutes before ceasing her efforts. During her efforts to resuscitate a pinkish fluid came out of Tariji's nose.

After ceasing her efforts to revive Tariji, the mother wrapped the child in a blanket/comforter and placed her in a chair in one of the bedrooms. The mother stated she did not attempt to contact Emergency Medical Services or 911.

On February 6, 2014, at approximately 3:00 p.m. Rachel Fryer placed Tariji in a suitcase. The mother contacted a friend for a ride to Crescent City. The friend dropped off the mother with the suitcase containing the body of Tariji in Crescent City. The mother walked to an address of a home in Crescent City. The mother then removed Tariji from the suitcase and buried her body near the house. The mother slept on the porch attached to the home that night. On February 7, 2014 at approximately 11:00 a.m. the mother's friend picked her up and they returned to Sanford. The mother left the other children at home with a friend while she was in Crescent City.

Law Enforcement subsequently responded to the scene in Putnam County and discovered Tariji Gordon's body where Rachel Fryer had indicated it was left.

The Child Protection Team completed interviews and examinations of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] disclosed their mother hit Tariji with a brown stick, a broom handle, a mop, and flip flops on a regular basis due to Tariji always being "bad". [REDACTED] disclosed the last beating to Tariji by their mother was on February 5, 2014. Please see the Child Protection Team Final Case Summaries for full details of the Medical Consult for Tariji and the Specialized Interviews conducted with [REDACTED]

The father, Timothy Gordon Jr. admitted to being in and out of the home prior to the child's death, although he was not supposed to be per the Dependency case. Concerns noted in the CPT reports that the father had spanked Tariji when he was in the home.

It was determined by the Medical Examiner that Tariji was beaten, bashed in the face multiple times, her upper and lower frenulum were torn, she had bruising across her forehead, cigarette burns on the palms of her hands, part of her hair was removed, she had bald spots, she was wearing a wig, she had suffered an acute subdural hemorrhage, her brain had swelled, and she passed away as a result.

On July 7, 2014, the investigation was closed with:

- Verified Findings of Death, Physical Injury, Bizarre Punishment, Medical Neglect, and Threatened Harm as to Tariji Gordon, with Rachel Fryer as the caregiver responsible.

- Verified Findings Threatened Harm as to Tariji Gordon, with Timothy Gordon as the caregiver responsible.
- Verified Findings Threatened Harm as to [REDACTED] with Rachel Fryer and Timothy Gordon as the caregiver's responsible.
- Not Substantiated Findings of Physical Injury as to [REDACTED]

The Sanford Police Department investigated the death of Tariji Gordon (2014-50000787). On February 11, 2014, Rachel Fryer was arrested and charged with Aggravated Child Neglect. On February 11, 2014, Rachel Fryer was charged with First Degree Murder, Tamper with Evidence, and Mishandle Dead Human Body Remains.

On February 12, 2014, District 23 Chief Medical Examiner Predrag Bulic, M.D., completed an autopsy of Tariji Gordon. ME# 14-23-049.

Final Diagnosis and Findings:

- I. Battered Child Syndrome
 - A. Acute Blunt Force Head Injuries
 1. Contusion and abrasion of forehead
 2. Contusion of left temple with laceration near the left eye
 3. Lacerations of frenula and labial mucosa
 4. Fracture of upper incisor teeth
 5. Subgaleal frontal hemorrhage
 6. Subdural hematoma, right cerebral hemisphere
 7. Optic nerve sheath hemorrhage, bilateral
 - B. Multiple Blunt Force Injuries, Variable Stages of Healing
 1. Multiple abrasions of chin, lips, cheeks, and upper right eyelid
 2. Patterned and non-patterned scars and healing contusions on the back, buttocks and upper thighs
 3. Lichenification (scarring) of lips, corners of mouth, chin and back
 - C. Cigarette Burns of the Left Hand
 - D. Human Bite Marks of the Right Upper Arm and Right Shoulder
 - E. Traction Alopecia/Abusive Hair Pulling

Cause of Death: Acute Subdural Hemorrhage

Due To: Blunt Force Injuries of the Head

Other Significant Conditions(s): Battered Child Syndrome

Manner of Death: Homicide

How Incident Occurred: Head injuries inflicted by other person(s)

Other Children in the Family

[REDACTED] were sheltered on February 11, 2014 and placed in foster care. Termination of Parental Rights proceedings are being pursued as to both parents of [REDACTED]

Summary of Prior Agency Involvement with Family


Please see the attached Special Review for further information on the family's prior history of agency involvement.



Central Region Child Fatality Specialist
Kirby Morgan

9/29/14

Date



Central Region Family Safety Program Manager
Traci Klinkbeil

9/29/14

Date