

Mom of boys killed in fire known to CPS

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Bri'Vion Keith Curry, 2, died in the fire this weekend.

As glass shattered around her and flames cooked the floors beneath her bare feet, something told 6-year-old Briaiona KayInn Curry, perhaps hardened instinct, that her brothers were dying.

According to court records, she raced across the scorching-hot floors to escape the fire in her grandmother's house. Later, she would tell hospital staff she tried to save 4-year-old Javunte White, but when he didn't move, she knew he was dead. So was her 2-year-old brother Bri'Vion Keith Curry.

Sunday's fire on Houston's southwest side, which apparently started when a stove was left on while Briaiona's mother went to the store for more cooking oil and cigarettes, was the latest tragic chapter for Briaiona and her brothers — a chapter that could have been avoided.

Mom took urine tests

Texas Child Protective Services acknowledged Tuesday that the children's mother, Prashawna Shant'e White, already known to CPS as a drug user, tested positive for marijuana during a random drug test five months ago, on April 30. Yet no one at the agency could explain why the children were allowed to remain in White's custody.

"At the time when she tested positive for marijuana, we should have required placing the children out of the home with a protective relative or in protective custody," said Estella Olguin, a CPS spokeswoman in Houston, who added the case is being reviewed internally. "That's one thing they'll have to review, why that wouldn't be enough to remove the children or consider an alternative placement."

White's children are the fourth and fifth Houston-area children in recent months who have died despite being on CPS radar. Austin investigators are reviewing how and why three other Houston-area children — Katy

infant Amber Maccurdy, Conroe 3-year-old David Tijerina and Spring 4-year-old Emma Thompson — died of abuse after all three had been reported to CPS as possible child abuse victims.

White, an admitted drug-user, had agreed to submit to urine tests as part of a deal she made with CPS after the agency confirmed last January that one of her three children had been sexually abused. The case was the third complaint made about the care of White's children since 2005.

In the first case, a complaint that White was a neglectful mother was dismissed after the caller gave CPS an address that did not exist. The second was made on Dec. 22, 2006 after White was arrested for stealing nine pairs of shoes, 16 shirts, a pair of shorts and two handbags and was given probation.

In January, CPS was called to the White home after a caller said a boyfriend had been sexually abusing one of the children. CPS confirmed the abuse with an exam.

As part of that case, White agreed to go to drug counseling and parenting classes, beginning in March. Despite the drug counseling, she tested positive for drugs the next month, in April.

White was allowed to keep the children and she subsequently tested negative for drugs on May 20, July 7 and Sept. 22, the day CPS closed out the case.

However, no one can say how that negative test on Sept. 22 reconciles with an interview CPS conducted Sunday after the fire in which White told the agency she began using drugs again about a month and a half before.

"Prashawna White said she does have a history with drugs and that her drug of choice is marijuana and handlebars," a CPS worker wrote in court records filed Monday.

"Handlebars" is a slang term for Xanax.

Attempts to reach White were not successful. A phone number listed in court documents for her, was not in service on Tuesday. She told CPS last Sunday she had been employed for about a month as a day care worker. The agency is reviewing employment practices at Keyworth Kiddie Corner as a result of the fire. A woman who answered the phone at the day care center declined to comment.

House known to HPD

The children were left in a house well known to Houston police and neighbors as a nuisance. This year alone, there have been nine calls to HPD for everything from domestic disturbance to guns being fired to assault. One neighbor, who asked his name not be used said a lot of people came to the house through the night and all day long and many suspected drug transactions were taking place.

Court records show that John Segura, father of Javunte, was in jail that weekend serving out his probation for selling drugs. A boyfriend of the grandmother, Pamela Bell, who was also in the house during the fire, also has past convictions for drugs, according to CPS and court records.

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