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Mother And Boyfriend Charged With Murder At Advisement Hearing; Bail Set At \$1 Million

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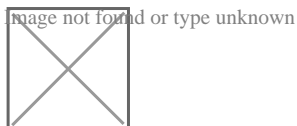


ST. CROIX -- Delicia Daniel, 29, and her boyfriend, Kyle Christopher, 22, were both charged with first-degree murder and other charges during their advisement hearing on Tuesday, in connection with the death of 4-year-old Aaron Benjamin, Jr., who was found dead in his mother's Lorraine Village housing community apartment on Friday, according to V.I.P.D. Public Information Officer Glen Dratte.

As previously reported by the Consortium, it was revealed during the advisement hearing that the father had been attempting to gain custody of his son fearing that the boy was being abused by his mother and her boyfriend. Yet even after numerous attempts and after registering a number of complaints with the Dept. of Human Services, he was not granted custody. During the Tuesday advisement hearing, it was further revealed that the deceased boy's sister, who is also the child of

the father, Aaron Benjamin Sr., also experienced a pattern of abuse by the mother and her boyfriend.

According to a person with intimate knowledge of the matter, Mr. Benjamin's experience with the Dept. of Human Services while attempting to alert the department of the abuse of his children was disheartening. "They even hung up the phone on him a number of times," this person said. Following the death of Mr. Benjamin's 4-year-old son, D.H.S. has been reaching out to the father, and has also offered to pay for funeral costs -- an offer the father, according to this person, did not accept.



Delicia Daniel, 29, and Kyle Christopher, 22. (Credit: VIPD)

Ms. Daniel and Mr. Christopher -- the latter who admitted to beating the child causing him to fall and hit his head against a chair -- were also charged with aggravated assault and battery, aggravated child abuse and neglect, and third-degree assault. Bail was set at \$1 million, and both suspects were remanded to the Golden Grove Detention Center pending their advisement hearing.

D.H.S. Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez has not returned a request for comment, although the Consortium attempted to reach her and left a message since Saturday.

Black and blue eye, bite marks, more abuse

According to the affidavit, the deceased child, who was examined by Dr. Leslie Burton at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, was dead on arrival. He also had a black and blue left eye, bite marks and fresh and old abrasions.

Officers said the girl child told police that "Daddy Kyle beats her and her brother with a black stick."

Father speaks out

Mr. Benjamin told police that a court order prevented him from having his children, and that the mother had kept them away from him since June. He told police that both his children had told him they were being beaten by Mr. Christopher, and that since April, he noticed his daughter had a black eye. The children had also expressed to their father that they did not want to go back to their mother's Lorraine Village apartment. And as relayed to the Consortium by a source, Mr. Benjamin told police that he made several reports to the Dept. of Human Services concerning the abuse.

Young Aaron Benjamin, Jr. dies

Mr. Christopher told police that on Oct. 10 at about 7:00 a.m., he slapped Aaron in the face for stealing his sister's Caprisun drink. The boy stumbled and fell, hitting his head against a chair. Thereafter, Aaron started to vomit, according to Mr. Christopher, who also told police that the boy continued vomiting and stumbling throughout the day.

The following day, Oct. 11, Aaron's condition hadn't improved. Mr. Christopher told police that at about noon that day, Aaron asked to use the bathroom but couldn't stand on his own, so he had to be assisted. The boy then stopped breathing, Mr. Christopher told detectives, according to the

affidavit.

Initially, Ms. Daniel told detectives that Mr. Christopher did not strike the children and that she was the only one to do so. Ms. Daniel later changed her statement to concede that Mr. Christopher did hit the children, although she said it wasn't in her presence.

Backstory

Mr. Dratte told the Consortium Friday that the 911 emergency call center had received notification of the incident at about 12:59 p.m. Officers and EMS personnel were immediately dispatched to the scene, and upon arrival, emergency personnel administered CPR on the boy to no avail.

In the initial V.I.P.D. release, police said the boy was found badly abused and was malnourished. Additionally, the VIPD's preliminary investigation with medical personnel into the incident found that the boy had varying stages of lacerations, which suggested he was badly beaten.

Police Commissioner Velinor said, "The circumstances of this tragedy is being investigated. I will assure the community that our officers will investigate this matter thoroughly and hold those involved accountable for their actions. We have a responsibility to protect our children from danger."