

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Human Services Says It Has Launched A Criminal Investigation Into Death of Young Aaron Benjamin

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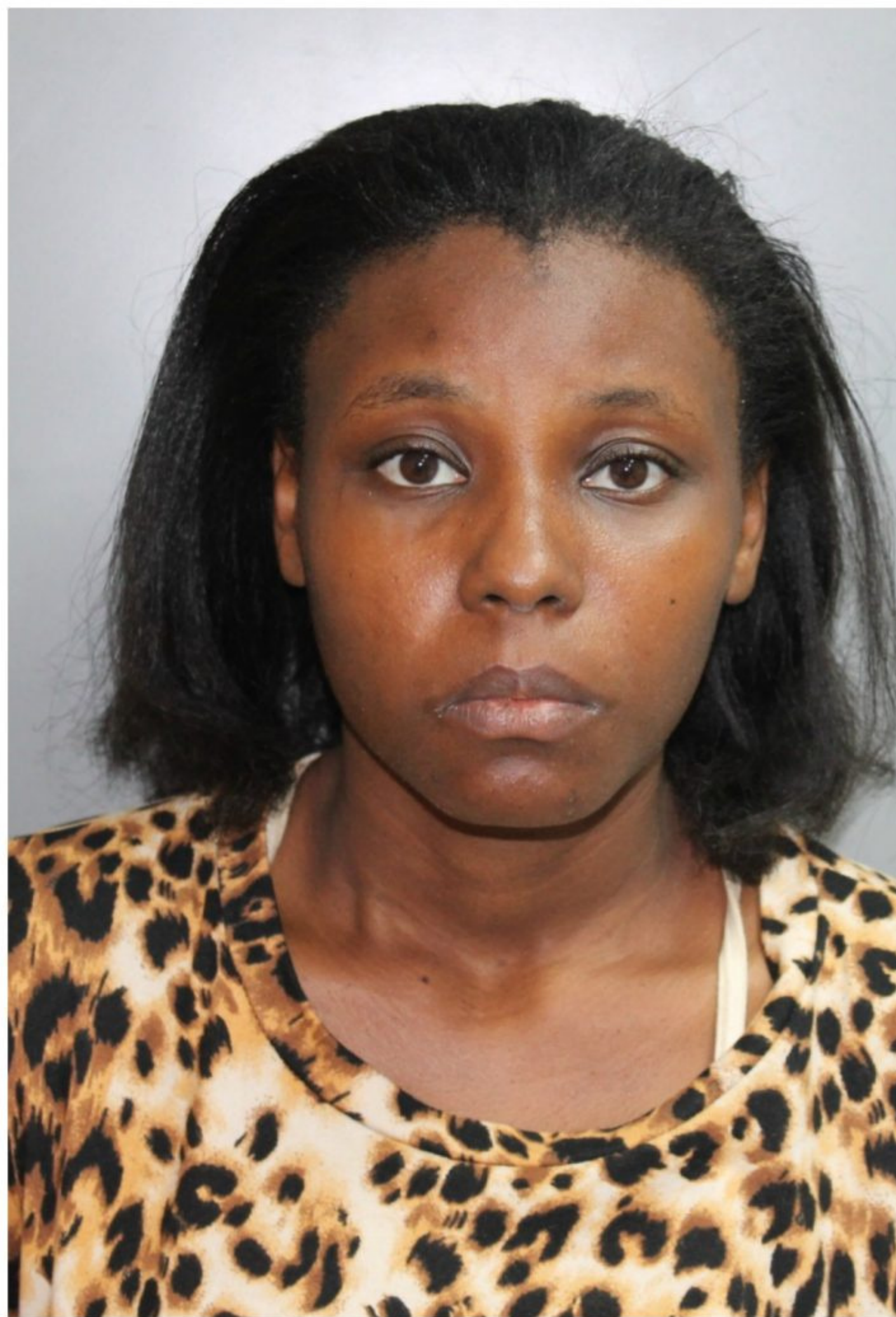
Ernice Gilbert **October 17, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- The Department of Human Services, under harsh criticism following the death of Aaron Benjamin, a 4-year-old whose mother along with her boyfriend were charged with his murder after the boy was found dead in his mother's Lorraine Village housing community apartment Friday, on Wednesday said it had launched a criminal investigation into the tragic incident, and said it was working with the V.I.P.D. on the case.

A person close to the father with intimate and firsthand knowledge of the father's dealings with D.H.S. and the courts, said the father had reached out to D.H.S. on a number of occasions for help, fearing that his children -- Aaron and a 6-year-old girl -- were being

abused by their mother, Delicia Daniel, 29, and her boyfriend, Kyle Christopher, 22.



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

But Human Services, on numerous occasions failed to act, this person said. Department employees also hung up the phone on the father a number of times, according to this person. Following the death of Aaron, D.H.S. has been reaching out to the father, Aaron Benjamin Sr., and has even offered to pay for funeral costs -- an offer the father has so far refused, this person said.

Mr. Benjamin confirmed to police as revealed in the affidavit made available on Tuesday, that he had been blocked from having custody of his children through a court order, and that the mother had prevented him from seeing the children since June.

On Thursday, D.H.S. Commissioner Designee Kimberley Causey-Gomez said the department would work to ascertain that such an incident does not occur in the future. "During this emotional time, our hearts and prayers go out to the family of little Aaron and to our Virgin Islands community. May we all choose to demonstrate kindness, sensitivity and support to those most affected by this tragedy," she said.

Ms. Causey-Gomez added, "The men and women of the Department of Human Services are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of one of the youngest among us. Social workers in the Virgin Islands work every day to stop potential harm to the Territory's children and youth. However, when children are hurt or worse, it is imperative that we investigate and arrive at answers and solutions immediately."

Ms. Causey-Gomez has yet to respond to reports of negligence at D.H.S. concerning this matter, and why the department failed to act even after the father on a number of occasions reported the abuse his children were receiving from the mother and her boyfriend.

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 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."