



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Man Sentenced to 20 Years for Shaking Death of Baby

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Matthew Ethan Handlang, 26, of Springfield, MO was sentenced today for shaking his three month old baby, Aubrey Handlang, to death. The defendant pled guilty and was sentenced today pursuant to an agreement with the Greene County Prosecutor's Office.

On December 19, 2013, deputies from the Greene County Sheriff's Office responded to the defendant's home in response to an emergency call about a child not breathing. At the time, the defendant reported that he had been trying to feed his daughter, she had choked on some water, and went unresponsive. Aubrey was transported to the hospital and pronounced dead on December 20, 2013. Aubrey had been born premature and had several medical issues. Due to those prior medical issues and the lack of external trauma, hospital personnel did have reason to believe that her death was suspicious.

An autopsy revealed that Aubrey had severe brain swelling, severe brain bleeding, bleeding in the spinal cord, and acute bleeding in the eyes. The medical examiner found that these injuries are all consistent with severe acute acceleration/deceleration injury, also known as "shaken baby syndrome" or "abusive head trauma." Outside of the findings in the brain and eyes, there were no other significant injuries to Aubrey. The medical examiner determined the cause of death to be blunt force injuries of the head.

Immediately after receiving the results of the autopsy, Sergeant Jamin Sackman interviewed the defendant. Initially, the defendant claimed, as he had before, that his daughter's death was an accident and resulted from choking. Upon further questioning

Subject: Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Press Release, State v. Handlang, 1431-CR00167-01

by Sgt. Sackman, the defendant said that he was home alone watching Aubrey. He grew frustrated with her because she was fussy and he was trying to change her diaper. While this was happening, the family dog was barking and scratching his leg. The defendant said when he initially became frustrated, he stepped out of the nursery to calm down. When he returned to the nursery, Aubrey was still crying and moving around, and that he became "overwhelmed" and shook the baby approximately seven times. He said that Aubrey immediately went unresponsive and a clear liquid leaked out of her nose. The defendant said he initially lied about what happened to his daughter because the defendant has a criminal history and was afraid to go to jail.

In exchange for pleading guilty quickly and sparing the victim's family from a lengthy trial, the Greene County Prosecutor's Office agreed to a 20 year sentence in the Missouri Department of Corrections. Child abuse resulting in death is considered a dangerous felony, therefore, the defendant must serve 85% of sentence before he is eligible for parole. During today's sentencing, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Wan noted that Aubrey's family grieves her loss everyday and that they are devastated by the defendant's loss of control that resulted in her death.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Stephanie Wan. It was investigated by the Greene County Sheriff's Office and Sergeant Jamin Sackman was the lead investigator assigned to the case.

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