

PENNSYLVANIA: Couple probed in 2d child's death

Written by Mike Newall, Inquirer Staff Writer
Sunday, 21 April 2013 00:00

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A Northeast Philadelphia couple sentenced to probation for practicing faith healing after the 2009 death of their ill toddler son are again under criminal investigation in connection with the death of their 8-month-old son Thursday.

Herbert and Catherine Schaible - members of a church that shuns medical care - were convicted of involuntary manslaughter for failing to bring their 2-year-old son to a doctor when he was sick with bacterial pneumonia. The couple had prayed over the sick child and called a funeral director when he died.

A judge ordered the Schaibles to arrange care for their seven other children by a "qualified medical practitioner." Now, with the death of another child, the Schaibles face a court hearing next week for possibly violating their parole as well as additional criminal charges.

Tasha Jamerson, a spokeswoman for the District Attorney's Office, would not discuss details of the investigation but said the terms of the Schaibles' probation were clear.

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"All of the children in their care had to have regular doctor's appointments and visits," she said Friday, "and if a child was sick, they were required to consult a medical practitioner and follow their recommendations and advice to the letter."

Brandon Schaible was born last Aug. 31. It is unclear if the child had medical problems.

Around 8 p.m. Thursday, the couple called the John F. Fluehr & Sons funeral home on Cottman Avenue and said the infant had died, according to a police report.

The funeral home notified the Medical Examiner's Office, which informed police. Paramedics who responded to the Rhawn Street house pronounced the child dead at 8:35. Investigators processed the house as a crime scene, according to the report.

Homicide detectives questioned the Schaibles at Police Headquarters Friday, said Capt. James Clark of the Homicide Unit.

The couple were released pending the medical examiner's ruling on what caused the child's death, he said.

"The investigation is still in the preliminary stages," Clark said. "Once the medical examiner makes a ruling, we will take statements from the parents and confer with the District Attorney's Office to find out what, if any, charges will be brought against these parents."

No one answered the Schaibles' front door Friday night.

Bobby Hoof, a lawyer who represented Herbert Schaible, did not return calls to his office late Friday. Mythri Jayaraman, who represented Catherine Schaible, also could not be reached.

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Kent Schaible died in 2009 after having pneumonia for two weeks.

Prosecutors said the Schaibles put their belief in faith healing above the child's best interests by praying over him instead of seeking medical care.

"We tried to fight the devil, but in the end the devil won," Herbert Schaible told a city social worker investigating the child's death.

None of the children had ever gone to a doctor or received medication.

Common Pleas Court Judge Carolyn Engle Temin sentenced the Schaibles to 10 years on probation and ordered them to schedule regular medical exams for their children until they turned 18.

The couple agreed to submit to periodic checks by probation officers and to open their children's medical records as requested.

It is unclear from court records how often probation officers have visited the Schaible home.

At the trial, a social worker from the Department of Human Services, Kenneth Dixon, testified that the surviving children appeared healthy and well cared for.

The child welfare agency could not open a case on the family based on religious beliefs alone, Dixon told the court.

Since Brandon's death, the agency has removed the Schaibles' seven remaining children.

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"Our job is to make sure the children are physically safe and placed in a secure environment at this point," Alicia Taylor, a DHS spokeswoman, said Friday.

At the time of Kent's death, Herbert and Catherine Schaible were members of the fundamentalist First Century Gospel Church in Juniata Park.

Herbert Schaible was a teacher at the church school. Catherine Schaible is the daughter of the school principal.

Even before Kent Schaible died, the church had come under scrutiny for the death of a child from measles and parents who prayed over their child's broken leg after he was hit by a car.

http://articles.philly.com/2013-04-21/news/38695278_1_herbert-schaible-faith-healing-child

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