

Analysis of causes that led to Toddler Alexa Marie Shearer's cardiac arrest and death in November, 1999

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Summary

Kathleen Butcher is a 40-year-old, white woman, and the mother of five children. She was accused of, and arrested for killing Alexa Marie Shearer by vigorous shaking of the head and blunt trauma to the head and abdomen. Alexa was a 15 month old toddler, who suffered from cardiac arrest and apnea on November 16, 1999 in Kathleen's house in Howard County, Maryland. Kathleen was her daycare provider and she had cared for Alexa since she was two months old.

Kathleen was arrested in December of 1999 based on a verbal communication between the Chief Medical Examiner for the District of Columbia, Dr. Jonathan Arden and the Howard County Police. Dr. Arden performed Alexa's autopsy on November 19, 1999. He told the police officer present at the autopsy, that Alexa's injuries and death were caused by blunt trauma to the head, and that the manner of death was homicide. In February of 2001, Kathleen was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and child abuse in the death of Alexa and sentenced to 10 years and 5 years, respectively, to serve concurrently in prison (Criminal Case No. 13-K-99-38775). Kathleen has stated that she took care of Alexa as her own child and never harmed her.

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