

The Columbus Dispatch: Call for Reporting, Diversion Program; No data on kids witnessing abuse

By: Rita Price

October 3, 2009

Statistics that tally abusers and their victims don't count little eyes.

But the scope of domestic violence could be better studied if reports also tracked the number of children who witness it, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio says.

"This is not an issue that's readily addressed," said Barbara Turpin, the organization's policy advocate. "It's not a standard requirement of law enforcement to record it."

Turpin said changing that would cost little or nothing.

Law-enforcement agencies could require the information on incident reports, and the Ohio attorney general could separate and compile data on children in its annual domestic-violence reports, she said.

Knowing how many children are affected can help communities develop their response to the problem, said Ronald Browder, the organization's director.

"Children who are witness to domestic violence are the silent victims," he said.

Advocates think they could push for programs to head off problems -- with school, crime and emotional disturbances -- if they had more demographic information about the children who live in violent homes.

According to a report by the child-advocacy organization, Ohio law-enforcement agencies received 74,551 domestic-violence calls in 2008. Children's Defense Fund-Ohio estimates that at least 67,000 children were witnesses.

Local domestic-violence experts say that tallying the children might be a noble idea, but they don't expect action.

Ohio doesn't even keep complete statistics on domestic-violence court cases, said Nancy Neylon, executive director of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. Neither misdemeanor nor felony domestic-violence convictions are measured in the Ohio Supreme Court's statewide data, officials said.

And the amount of money for programs and shelters that help domestic-violence victims is shrinking as the number of calls is soaring, she said.

Gail Heller, executive director of CHOICES, a Columbus agency that helps victims of domestic violence, said calls to its hot line are up 20 percent over last year.

A little less than half of the women in the CHOICES shelter have children staying with them.

"We recognize that the kids are experiencing a different kind of trauma," Heller said. "We really do spend a lot of time with them."

Although data on child witnesses are not funneled into any particular agency, some police officers note it.

Columbus police reports have a space where officers can record whether children were present when the violence took place, said Sgt. Rich Weiner, Police Division spokesman. Officers likely limit it to direct witnesses rather than list all children living in the home, he said.

Children often are present when police show up on domestic-violence calls, Weiner said. "Just taking a wild guess, I'd say eight out of 10 homes do have the kids there in the house."

He said it isn't a hardship for officers to record the numbers and ages of children.

"We have the capability to do that," he said. "It's up to the bean counters to pull the information together."

The Cincinnati Enquirer: Prosecutors to discuss Carroll case

By: Barrett J. Brunsman

October 5, 2009

UNION TWP. - The two lawyers who prosecuted Liz and David Carroll Jr. for the murder of their 3-year-old foster child, Marcus Fiesel, will talk about their trial tactics during that and other high-profile cases at a legal seminar this month.

It will be the first time Daniel "Woody" Breyer, the chief deputy prosecutor for Clermont County, and Mark Piepmeier, the chief deputy prosecutor for Hamilton County, will appear together to discuss picking a jury, dealing with difficult witnesses and how to handle media scrutiny.

"Everybody's trying to manipulate the press - they think it helps," Breyer said of defense lawyers and prosecutors. "Sometimes it may, and sometimes it can blow up in your face."

The two veteran prosecutors are expected to recount details of some of "the most notorious and difficult cases in the history of the Queen City," said Scott Smith, a Clermont County assistant prosecutor who is one of the organizers of the Oct. 23 seminar.

While geared to lawyers and judges, the event at the Union Township Civic Center is open to anyone who pays the admission fee. Neither Breyer nor Piepmeier will be paid for their appearance.

Both Carrolls were sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Marcus.

Breyer also prosecuted the murder trials of Jerry Lawson, Michael Webb and Jesse James Cowans, all of whom are on Ohio's death row.

Piepmeier also prosecuted serial killer Alton Coleman, who was executed, and more than a dozen others now on death row.

As lead special prosecutor following the Lucasville prison riot, which was one of the longest and most violent ever, Piepmeier oversaw the cases against 50 inmates. Forty-seven were convicted, with five sentenced to death.

Breyer won convictions in the six Lucasville cases he prosecuted, including the death penalty in one.

Discussing the gathering of evidence will be Howard Hudson of the Hamilton County prosecutor's office, who as a state trooper was the lead investigator following the 11-day riot.

It was difficult to get cooperation from inmates who were witnesses to the riot or to gather evidence at the ransacked prison, which Breyer called "the largest crime scene in the history of Ohio."

The Cincinnati Enquirer: Wyoming man charged with stomping boy

By: The Enquirer

October 4, 2009

WYOMING - A Wyoming man will be in Hamilton County Court on Monday morning to be arraigned on charges that he choked his 6-year-old son and stomped on the boy's head.

Wayne E. Carter, 45, is accused of felony domestic violence in the incident that occurred in the 1400 block of West Avenue at 1:15 p.m. Saturday, according to a police report.

A court affidavit by the boy's mother said the boy told her he bumped a mug into Carter's mouth, leading to the man pushing a table across the room and stomping on the child's head three times.

The mother observed Carter choking the boy, the affidavit said. His tooth was dislodged and blood was coming from his mouth.

Police said the boy also had a large bump on his forehead.

Carter left the home shortly after and was arrested at 5 p.m. in the 500 block of Grandin Avenue in Springdale, according to police.

He was booked into Hamilton County Jail on \$25,000 bond.

The Cincinnati Enquirer: Grandparents filling parents' role

By: John Johnston

October 3, 2009

Grandparents filling parents' role

John Johnston

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The boys, ages 7, 5 and 4, just arrived home from school.

Each one wants something - a snack, homework help, play time - which means the afternoon is about to get much more hectic for their step-grandmother, 58-year-old Rosana Ruthruff.

"I've got three of them going three different ways," says Ruthruff, who has permanent custody of the boys. She lives with them in an Independence trailer park, and says her routine typically includes doing laundry, preparing meals, giving baths and going to doctor appointments.

Raising three youngsters isn't what Ruthruff, who is on medical disability because of a heart condition, would have envisioned a few years ago. All three have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The oldest child has oppositional defiant disorder, which is characterized by angry, disruptive behavior; he also has endured four surgeries in three years for Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, a hip disorder.

"But I wouldn't trade these kids for a million dollars," says Ruthruff, who is separated from her husband and raised four children of her own. "I don't want them in foster care.

"If it wasn't for them, I don't even know if I'd be alive, because that's what keeps me going. When I hear one of them say, 'I love you,' or 'Grandma, you're never going to leave me,' whatever I go through is worth it."

In Kentucky, 86,497 grandparents live with their juvenile grandchildren, and 49,490 of those grandparents, or 57 percent, are financially responsible for them. That means they pay for their grandchildren's food, shelter, clothing, etc.

That's the fifth-highest percentage in the country, according to numbers the U.S. Census released last month from its 2008 American Community Survey, which surveyed 3 million households nationwide.

In Ohio, 205,855 grandparents live with their juvenile grandchildren, and 95,909 of them, or 46.6 percent, are providing primary care. That ranks No. 22 among states.

Nationally, 6.4 million grandparents live with their juvenile grandchildren, and 2.6 million of those grandparents, or 40.7 percent, are responsible for their care.

Such numbers are rooted in a growing trend. Today about 6 percent of children under age 18 live in households headed by a grandparent - a percentage that has doubled in 40 years, according to census figures.

Kentucky officials couldn't pinpoint why the percentage of grandparents responsible for grandchildren is so high, but experts say grandparents typically take on child-rearing responsibilities when parents are unwilling or unable to because of substance abuse, abandonment, incarceration, domestic violence or neglect and abuse of the children.

Some experts say the recession might also effect as unemployed parents place children with grandparents, but there are no numbers to back that up.

In Ruthruff's case, she says she took in her step-grandchildren because neither her stepson, who she raised since he was 5, nor the children's mother could adequately provide for them. The parents were teens when they began having children, she says.

"Kids trying to raise kids didn't work."

But grandparents struggle, too.

"I don't care if you're a 50-year-old grandmother or a 70-year-old grandmother, it completely throws your life into chaos," says Deborah Anderson, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living.

In surveys, grandparents who are raising grandchildren indicate that their top needs are financial assistance, legal documentation (so children can be enrolled in school and receive medical care), child-care support and emotional support, says Crystal Ward Allen, executive director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, an association of county child welfare agencies.

In Ohio, funding was reduced this year for the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program.

Since 2006, it has helped divert children from foster care by providing grandparents and other kinship caregivers up to \$3,500 over three years as an incentive to make a legal commitment to a child. The amount is now \$2,050 over three years.

Kentucky's Kinship Care program, which began in 2000, also provides an alternative to foster care. Relatives - most often grandparents - receive \$300 per month per child when they take custody after child abuse or neglect has been substantiated against the parents. Additional start-up money for caregivers may also be available.

Another program, Kentucky Family Caregiver, began in 2006 and offers eligible grandparent caregivers up to \$750 a year per grandchild. It can be used for children's clothing, school supplies or medical and dental expenses. Kentucky Kinship Care participants are not eligible.

Ruthruff has received Family Caregiver money. She says she struggles to make ends meet with her monthly Social Security disability check and the boys' Supplemental Security Income.

"Many of the grandparents I've talked to have retired because they could afford to, based on their income; they were worried only about themselves. Now they're entrusted with the care of a child, and there is not enough money to go around," says Joan Bowling, family and consumer science agent with the Kenton County Cooperative Extension Service.

She's attempting to start support groups in Northern Kentucky for grandparents raising grandchildren. Grandparents need to know they're not alone. Many live with fear, she says.

"They may be up in age, and they worry about who's going to care for the children if something happens to them," Bowling says.

That's Ruthruff's concern.

Although relatively young at age 58, she has suffered three heart attacks. Four years ago she had bypass surgery. She's also dealing with diabetes and high blood pressure.

"I just hope God lets me live long enough to see (the children get) old enough to where they can take care of themselves, or tell someone if someone is mistreating them."

She's interrupted by one of the boys. "Mamaw!" he wails from his room, unable to find a pair of pants.

"Wait a minute. I washed them," she calls, then hurries off to help the boy.

Additional Facts

For more information

The AARP Grandparent Information Center offers a wealth of information for grandparents raising grandchildren, including a searchable database, called the GrandCare Support Locator, with links to programs and support groups.

It's online at <http://tinyurl.com/2r7kl2>.

The Cincinnati Enquirer: Center stands up for abused children

By: Eric Bradley

October 1, 1009

MASON - Life is different now for Kim Cappadonia and her six children than it was two years ago, when her 9-year-old daughter revealed that Cappadonia's husband, the girl's stepfather, was sexually abusing her.

Cappadonia, 35, went to the police then. Her middle-class life of being a stay-at-home mom home-schooling her children was over, as was her husband's freedom. He is now serving a life sentence for two charges of rape and one charge of gross sexual imposition.

With no income - her husband was an information technology professional - Cappadonia lost her house. She was forced to live in a homeless shelter, where she huddled in a 48-degree basement room with her young children, one of whom was newborn.

Not everyone goes to police as Cappadonia did to get help for their abused child, and that's something she hopes changes.

"A lot of people don't tell," said Cappadonia, now living with her parents in Butler County. "There are people who would stay in that situation because they would think, 'What would I do?'"

"The cost for me was I lost everything, but I have my children. My children are safe," she said.

Cappadonia shared her story at a fundraising event for the Child Advocacy Center of Warren County on Thursday at Manor House in Mason. The fundraiser was attended by about 160 people, including local government figures and two-time Heisman Trophy-winning Ohio State University running back Archie Griffin.

The Child Advocacy Center of Warren County, founded in February 2008, assists children like Cappadonia's daughter and their families, said Teresa Wiles, manager and sole full-time employees of the nonprofit group.

The organization, based in Franklin, coordinates the typical response to a child-abuse case so that a child is not pulled around between doctors, law enforcement officials and therapists during a traumatic period of their life.

"We don't need to further victimize them with a system that's trying to protect them," Wiles explained.

Warren County's Child Advocacy Center has served about 400 seriously abused children since its opening; that's 400 too many, Wiles said, a number that is surely not all of the children who are severely abused in a county of 200,000 residents.

Cappadonia said it's important to support groups like the Child Advocacy Center of Warren County because families need support to recover and often have none.

"Their center opened after we had already opened the system, but they have genuine compassion and concern not only for my child but my entire family," she said.

For information on the Child Advocacy Center of Warren County or how to help, go to www.cacwarrencounty.org or call 513-261-6031.

The Dayton Daily News: Child abuse cases alarmingly high and more severe, officials say

By: Lucas Sullivan

October 4, 2009

DAYTON — Infants and toddlers have become helpless casualties of an economic crisis, suffering severe physical abuse at levels that rival anything local experts have seen in at least 20 years.

Investigations of physical abuse in Montgomery County increased from 817 in 2006 to 1,033 the next year and landed at 981 in 2008, according to county data.

The numbers are rising more this year.

Dayton Children's Medical Center, which handles patients from throughout the Miami Valley, reported an increase from 195 cases of possible abuse between January and August in 2008, to 326 during the same time period this year.

Caseworkers in Clark County also reported an increase in physical abuse, and like their counterparts in Montgomery County, they've gone from working about 15 cases at a time, to about 20.

Warren and Greene counties reported no increases in physical abuse.

The increase in physical abuse is concerning, but more alarming, "it's more severe," said Carol Griesdorn, a 20-year veteran with Montgomery County Children's Services.

County Coroner Dr. James Davis said the abuse has not led to more child fatalities, but the level of violence is higher.

“There needs to be a more appropriate word to what we’re seeing because it’s not abuse,” he said. “What we’re seeing is outrageous brutality.”

The rise in severe abuse mirrors a local unemployment rate that ballooned from 6 percent in 2005 to nearly 12 percent last month, according to data from the state department of Job and Family Services.

Griesdorn and caseworkers from area counties said the recession has stripped social services, leaving parents or caregivers with short fuses without a support system.

That means more helpless children in dangerous situations, Griesdorn said.

Mary Ann Nelson, an intake supervisor for Montgomery County’s Children’s Services, said the economy isn’t completely to blame because some people are prone to violence. “But things have changed,” she said. “It always used to be that Children’s Services was the last resort for parents. But now, they are coming to us first (for help).”

The Dayton Daily News: Death of 3-year-old example of troubling trend

By: Lucas Sullivan

October 4, 2009

DAYTON — Every case of child abuse is disturbing, but images of the injuries that led to 3-year-old Hope Cook’s death won’t leave forensic or homicide investigators anytime soon.

Cook was beaten to death by her half-sister Kimberly Cook, 23, in July 2008. A Montgomery County jury took 90 minutes Thursday, Oct. 1, to find Kimberly Cook guilty of all murder and abuse charges.

Hope Cook’s head injuries were so severe, county Coroner James Davis used phrases like “Oh my gosh,” and “horrific brutality,” when talking about the case.

“Let’s just say there is no doubt Hope Cook was murdered,” Davis said. “I would rather spare the public the extent of the brutality and only say it’s the worse case I’ve seen in my 29 years.”

While Hope Cook’s death is an extreme case, child advocates say the instances of especially harsh abuse appear to be increasing.

“The past year I have noted (that) many infants and younger toddlers presenting physical abuse concerns have more severe injuries,” said Dr. Lori Vavul-Roediger, director for the Department of Child Advocacy at Dayton Children’s Medical Center. “There seems to be a slightly increasing trend (of) abusive head injuries in infants and younger toddlers.”

It's difficult for medical experts to pinpoint why more children are suffering severe head trauma, but when it comes to head injuries from abuse or accident, the indicators are palpable, Davis said.

"It's very difficult to fracture a child's skull," he said. "Bones in young children are more rubbery and much harder to break than in adults.

"We can see a pattern in the fracture (like a cracked egg) and tell right away. When you see a solid bone that's fractured like that — they've sustained a severe blow."

While Vavul-Roediger acknowledged the possibility of a link between the increase in violence and the economy, she said that increased awareness among professionals about the signs of abuse also is leading to more reported cases.

But there is still a long way to go, she said.

"A major factor is that family violence is exceedingly common, and sadly, overlooked by our society," she said. "We as a community and a nation often fail to protect our children and respond appropriately to tragic family violence."

Disbelief is not uncommon as well, particularly when a parent is confronted with allegations of child abuse by a loved one.

Homicide detectives believe that was the case in the death of 2-year-old Malechi Wilson.

The toddler was beaten severely in early June in the home of his mother's boyfriend. Police said the boy suffered for hours before his mother, Denise Stinson, called 911.

The coroner said Malechi was beaten so badly his internal organs were severed.

Stinson would not say why she waited so long to call police, and she refused to blame her boyfriend Mark Newberry, whom police said beat the boy.

Without Stinson's cooperation, the investigation into Malechi's death stalled; and to date, no one has been charged for Wilson's death.

"It's hard for some parents to accept that their significant other could do something like this," said Carol Griesdorn, a caseworker with Montgomery County Children's Services. "But things start piling up on people and they snap. We are seeing more and more heat-of-the-moment incidents."

At the same time, support services are being cut, said Nancy Mahoney, of Clark County Children's Services. "We are laying off 33 people here, including me. Families are losing safety nets."

Mahoney said her agency is relying more on the families they serve to work out solutions.

"We had a mom that had a substance abuse issue, and her children were left in a questionable supervision situation while the mother decided to go out and use drugs," Mahoney said. "We sat down with (the family) and they were able to work out a system to adequately care for the children."

It's not the best solution, she said, "but the children are in a safer environment."

Columbus Dispatch: Man gets 2 years for baby's rat bites

By Randy Ludlow

October 6, 2009

It isn't a case of the defendants' "feeding the baby to the rats," said Pike County Prosecutor Rob Junk.

Still, the Red Bridge Road mobile home was filthy, and the infant's injuries were obvious, Junk said.

Todd C. Trent triggered his own arrest, and those of three others, when he picked up the telephone and called 911 to summon medical help for the infant on July 19.

The baby, then 6 weeks old, had extensive injuries on her back and left foot, losing two toes, because of being bitten by rats over an extended period, authorities charged.

Trent, 18, the boyfriend of the infant's mother, pleaded guilty yesterday to child endangering and was sentenced to two years in prison by Common Pleas Court Judge Randy Deering.

Trent could be released from prison in as little as six months. As part of a plea arrangement, Junk agreed not to oppose a petition for early release.

"I would have been happy with one day" in prison, Junk said. "Somebody needed to answer for this."

He said he agreed to the deal because of two mitigating factors: Trent is mentally low functioning, and he ultimately sought help for the baby. Trent, who is not the infant's father, faced a maximum of five years in prison. His attorney, Joan Garaczkowski of Portsmouth, could not be reached for comment.

The baby's mother, Katrina Lowe, is scheduled to go on trial in Juvenile Court on Nov. 12 on a delinquency count of child endangering. She now is 18 but was 17 when the baby was injured.

Junk tried to bring her to trial as an adult, but a judge decided to keep her case in Juvenile Court. If convicted, the harshest sentence she could get would be being locked in a juvenile facility until she turns 21.

Child-endangering cases also are pending against Joseph Gunter, 33, and Tina Gunter, 29, who lived in the mobile home with Lowe and Trent. The Gunters are free on bond, and Lowe was never in custody.

The infant girl was hospitalized for several days and then placed with relatives. Pike County Children Services is seeking permanent custody of the baby and Lowe's 2-year-old son.

Akron Beacon Journal: Akron couple indicted in child porn case

Staff Report

October 6, 2009

The couple involved in what Akron police call one of the worst cases of child pornography they have investigated have been indicted.

The Hazel Street couple are accused of using children — all girls under the age of 13 — to produce pornography. Michael Lee Winland, 37, and Stephennie Murphy, 31, have been indicted by the Summit County Grand Jury on nine felony counts including rape, pandering obscenity involving a minor, illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material or performance, endangering children and gross sexual imposition.

Police charge that Winland produced the material and that Murphy did not stop him.

The investigation into the couple began Aug. 16, when an 8-year-old girl was treated at Akron Children's Hospital for sexual trauma.

Authorities said the investigation shows the couple have been producing child pornography for several years. Their victims are family acquaintances and friends of those children, police said.

The couple lived in an upstairs apartment on Hazel Street on Akron's near East Side.

Summit County Children Services is assisting some of the victims.

Winland is scheduled to be arraigned Wednesday morning in Summit County Common Pleas Court. Murphy's arraignment is pending.

Newark Advocate: Convicted ex-clergyman seeks new trial; Prosecutor: Aleshire has no new evidence

By Jessie Balmert

October 7, 2009

NEWARK -- A former Hebron clergyman convicted of sex crimes in 2005 wants a new trial to hear evidence he says proves his innocence, but the prosecutor says there's nothing new.

Lonny "Joe" Aleshire was sentenced to seven years in prison after he pleaded no contest and was found guilty of 10 charges, including first-degree felony rape, for sexual conduct with two girls -- ages 15 and 17 at the time -- while they were parishioners and he was an associate pastor at Licking Baptist Church in Hebron, according to court records.

"In this motion, (Aleshire) attempts to raise a multitude of issues, most of which are not at all new and have previously been raised before this court, two courts of appeals and the Ohio Supreme Court," Licking County Prosecutor Ken Oswalt wrote in his motion to deny Aleshire's request.

Aleshire, who is representing himself, states the then-17-year-old victim recanted her initial allegation that he had raped her when talking with a Newark detective and Licking County Children's Services employee, according to the motion for a new trial.

Aleshire also pointed out discrepancies in timelines as outlined in the victims' depositions and gave alibis for at least three incidents with the younger victim, according to the motion.

The victims and their family sued Aleshire, his father who serves as the senior pastor of Licking Baptist Church, the church and several national Baptist figures in 2007, according to court records. Through those depositions, Aleshire found inconsistencies with the stories documented by Newark detectives, according to his motion.

Aleshire's motion also states he was denied counsel when arraigned in municipal court and was unaware of the maximum sentence for the crimes.

Oswalt cited several procedural reasons the motion should be dismissed, including a lack of jurisdiction and the inability of granting a new trial for a case that never had an initial trial, according to his motion to deny Aleshire's request.

"All those claims aren't new," Oswalt said. "They were made in previous filings with the trial court and the court of appeals."

Oswalt said he did not know of any evidence to suggest Aleshire did not perpetrate the crimes of which he was convicted.

Aleshire's most recent appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court was not heard after the Fifth District Court of Appeals upheld his conviction, Oswalt said.

"We do not find that (Aleshire) is able to demonstrate that, but for the court's error, he would not have entered a plea of guilty, and insisted on going to trial," according to an opinion written by Judge W. Scott Gwin.

Judge Jon Spahr is scheduled to decide if Aleshire will be granted a hearing on his evidence or a new trial on Oct. 26. Aleshire is set to be released from the Chillicothe Correctional Institution on Jan. 24, 2012.

WCMH-TV (Columbus): Parents Receive Letter From School After Alleged Rape

By Denise Yost

October 6, 2009

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Rape accusations have stunned parents and students at a Central Ohio high school.

A 16-year-old girl claims she was raped by a male student inside Eastmoor Academy last week. Parents were informed Tuesday of what allegedly happened inside a locker room.

NBC 4 contacted the families of the victim and suspect, but both declined to comment on the case.

Investigators from the Franklin County prosecutor's office arrived to ask questions and get more information about the alleged rape in preparation for a grand jury hearing.

Denzel McDougald, 18, is charged with rape and kidnapping. He is a football standout for the Eastmoor Warriors and was being looked at by three Ohio Mid-American Conference schools.

The letter parents received contained no specifics, but mentioned an alleged assault. It mostly addressed safety being a top priority in the school and asked parents to call the principal with any questions.

For LeJuan Townsel, the parent of an Eastmoor student, the news was very disappointing.

"If he did do it, then he definitely needs to pay the price for what it is because I have a daughter as well and I wouldn't want anybody to do that to my child," Townsel said.

McDougald is being held in jail on \$100,000 bond.

The school immediately contacted the students' parents, police and Franklin County Children Services when the alleged incident was reported.

WHIO-Radio (Dayton): Mom convicted in rollover death of five-month-old

By Tom Michaels

October 8, 2009

TROY, Ohio -- A woman accused of killing her baby, rolling over her in bed, is convicted of child endangering.

Prosecutors say Tiffani Cantrell, 23, of Piqua, partied all night before the tragic incident in 2008.

It took less than two hours for the Miami County jury to reach a verdict.

She faces up to five years in the slammer at sentencing in November.

Witnesses testified that not long before 5-month-old Keandra Cantrell died, her mother was at another house, drinking and taking Vicodin pills.

Cantrell had reportedly been advised some two years by Children's Services before about the dangers of sleeping with another child.

Dayton Daily News: Mother who rolled over onto baby found guilty

By Nancy Bowman

October 7, 2009

TROY — A Miami County jury found a Piqua woman guilty Wednesday, Oct 7, of child endangering in the 2008 rollover death of her 5-month-old daughter.

Tiffani Cantrell, 23, was accused of rolling onto the child, who was sleeping in bed with her after Cantrell spent the night partying, Jim Bennett, first assistant Miami County prosecutor, said.

Jurors deliberated less than two hours before returning the verdicts in the second day of Cantrell's trial in county Common Pleas Court. The child endangering charge is a misdemeanor with the jury's subsequent finding that Cantrell's actions resulted in serious physical harm being a felony.

She could receive up to five years in prison at sentencing Nov. 16.

Bennett said witnesses testified that the night before Keandra Cantrell died, her mother was across the street at a friend's house, drinking beer and taking Vicodin pills.

Those gathered drank and played cards until 5:30 a.m. when Cantrell went home, and put the infant in bed with her, Bennett said.

Police were called to the house around 8:45 a.m. Sept. 29, 2008, on a report of the child not breathing.

Bennett said the case is different from other rollover cases in which a death was considered an accident because of evidence Cantrell was advised by Children's Services in 2006 about the dangers of sleeping with another child, he said.

"It was her choice to sleep with the baby. She had been partying all night. This was just a prescription for disaster — after she'd previously been warned," Bennett said. "We just wanted her to be responsible."