

GRANDMOTHER REPORTS DEATH THREAT COURT HEARING SHOWS TAZAR IS SAFE, SHE SAYS

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The grandmother of the 15-year-old boy who police said sold crack cocaine to pay off his mother's drug debt said Wednesday she has been threatened anonymously.

Regina **Carter** told reporters who attended a Wayne County Juvenile Court hearing for her grandson, **Tazar Carter**, that a male caller left a message with her answering service that said, "I'm dead."

"They're going to kill me," **Carter** said. "I'm ready for them. Come on."

Carter said she was pleased with the way Juvenile Court Referee Harriet Harris was handling **Tazar**'s case.

"He's safe now," **Carter** said.

At the request of the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, Harris dismissed two drug counts against **Tazar** and set a March 5 pretrial hearing on two delinquency charges of being truant from home and from school.

Harris also postponed until next week a pretrial hearing in a child protective proceeding that alleges **Tazar** was neglected by his mother, Mary **Carter**, 34. That hearing will decide whether **Tazar** falls under the jurisdiction of juvenile court and should be made a temporary ward.

The hearing was postponed because **Tazar**'s mother, who is in the Wayne County Jail, was not brought to court.

Mary **Carter** and **Tazar Carter** have denied earlier reports that the mother had sold her son to a dope dealer to settle a drug debt, although police believe **Tazar** sold drugs in part to pay off his mother's debt.

The case has gained international publicity, and Harris denied courtroom access to five television camera crews Wednesday.

"We're trying to save this child's life, and I can't have this distraction," Harris said.

Harris ordered that **Tazar** be released from the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility and placed in the care of the Department of Social Services. DSS could place **Tazar** in a group home, shelter, foster home or with a relative, but by law he cannot be locked up in any placement.

Tazar promised Harris that he would not run away and would appear at all future court hearings.

"You're not a criminal. You're being treated as a child who needs protection," Harris said. "I can't protect you if I don't know where you are."

Tazar asked: "Miss Harris, will I be going to the placement today?"

Harris promised: "As soon as they make the arrangements."

Mary **Carter** , who called the Free Press from jail Wednesday, said "that sounds goods" when told about Wednesday's events.

"I want him to get help like he needed," **Carter** said. "I want to be able to tell him I love him." Of her mother's appearance at court, she said, "I'm glad she's there for him and somebody in my family is there for him."

Mary **Carter** is being held on an unrelated burglary charge for which she had previously failed to appear in court.

Robert Stanley, an alleged dealer who police say forced **Tazar** to perform sex acts on female drug buyers, faces a preliminary examination Friday on two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

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