

MAXEY SCHOOL RESIDENT TO BE ARRAIGNED IN SLAYING

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A 19-year-old resident of the W. J. Maxey Boys Training School was moved Thursday to the Livingston County Jail to await arraignment today on a charge of murder in the slaying of a school social worker.

Jermell Johnson, named in a warrant Thursday, had been identified as a suspect and kept in isolation at Maxey since shortly after the body of Barbara Synnestvedt, 46, was found Sunday night. State police said she was attacked and strangled in a lounge in the Green Oak Center, the maximum security facility across M-36 from the main Maxey campus in Whitmore Lake.

State Social Services Director Gerald Miller held meetings throughout the day at Maxey and Green Oak, beginning each with a memorial tribute to Synnestvedt, who had worked at Maxey only since September. She was the first worker to be killed on duty.

Miller said he has established a committee to review all safety and security procedures at the campus and report to him within 60 days.

Valerie Williams, one of the 166 youth specialists employed at Maxey, said the slaying has been "a devastating experience for all of us." But she said her union, AFSCME Local 1327, has complained about dangerous conditions.

"Some people have called this a wake-up call," she said. "This is not a wake-up call. This has been called before."

Johnson had been at Maxey since 1990 after pleading guilty to three counts of rape.

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