

SAFETY NET FAILED SLAIN BOY - NEW LEGAL PROTECTIONS TOO LATE TO HELP TODDLER

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, October 19, 2002

Author: JACK KRESNAK AND BEN SCHMITT FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Two-year-old Daniel Woodward, allegedly beaten to death for wetting his pants by his mother's boyfriend, was born into a Detroit family with a history of child neglect, according to court records.

The toddler's mother, Cherise Woodward, lost her parental rights to another child in 1999 because she didn't seek help for her drug and mental health problems, records show.

On Friday, Woodward's boyfriend, **Roderick Bailey**, 32, was arraigned on first-degree murder and child abuse charges in 36th District Court in Detroit. Magistrate Steve Lockhart ordered Bailey held in the Wayne County Jail without bond.

Officials with the Michigan Family Independence Agency would not say whether they had ever looked in on Daniel before his death. The boy was born four months too early to be covered by an FIA policy that now sends workers to check on babies born to mothers who previously had children taken away from them.

Daniel was born Nov. 3, 2000. In March 2001, the state began the system of cross-checking birth records from the Department of Community Health against the FIA's registry of parents who have lost their parental rights. When there's a match, workers are required to investigate whether there's a risk of harm to the child remaining in that home.

Woodward could not be reached for comment Friday. Daniel's grandmother said she wouldn't elaborate on what happened to the toddler and why her daughter lost custody of an older child.

Woodward's first child, a daughter named Erika who was born in 1997, was placed in foster care because her mother was just 15 and had left the baby alone on one occasion and on another had left the baby with an inappropriate person while she broke out the windows of her mother's house.

Cherise Woodward was a temporary court ward herself because of neglect, according to Wayne County Juvenile Court records.

Woodward frequently ran away from her foster care placements and was involved in illegal drugs, the records said.

Woodward's rights to her first child were terminated because she failed to follow through on several court-ordered programs, including parenting classes, individual and family counseling, substance abuse treatment, obtaining a legal source of income and finding a suitable home.

The FIA's policy of checking on children born to parents like Woodward was announced in September 2000, shortly after the beating death of 7-month-old Miracle Jackson by her mother's boyfriend. Miracle's mother, Tracey Swan, had lost her parental rights to other children because of abuse by another boyfriend.

While Daniel Woodward was born less than two months later, the FIA didn't launch its new procedures for another four months.

Since then, FIA workers have investigated the living situations of hundreds of children born to parents with histories of child abuse or neglect, sometimes resulting in those children being placed in foster care.

Bailey is accused of beating Daniel to death Wednesday because he was angry that the boy had wet his pants. Bailey was baby-sitting at his home on the 6300 block of Sparta on Detroit's west side while Woodward was at work. A neighbor told police that Bailey called him and told him that Daniel had fallen down the steps.

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-223-4544 or kresnak@freepress.com. Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-222-6597 or schmitt@freepress.com.

Caption: Photo

Daniel Woodward, 2, was beaten to death by his mother's boyfriend for pants-wetting, police say.

Roderick Bailey is accused of beating his girlfriend's son to death because the boy had wet his pants

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: DANIEL WOODWARD ; DEATH ; CHILD ; HOMICIDE ; CHILD ABUSE ; RODERICK; BAILEY; PARENT ; NEGLECT ; DRUG ABUSE

Record Number: 0210190317

Copyright (c) 2002 Detroit Free Press