

## **DETROIT: FAMILY DEFENDS FATHER FIGURE IN DEATH - STATE IS BLAMED IN ABUSE, MURDER CASE**

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Sitting on a sofa in the apartment on Detroit's west side where 2-year-old Isaiah **Martin** 's toys still rest in a corner, Joseph Taylor said he has few answers.

Isaiah "was a good kid, a happy kid. I can't explain what happened. I know that's what everyone wants to know," said Taylor, 43.

Isaiah, a smart little boy with big brown eyes, died Friday. Taylor's 23-year-old son, also named Joseph Taylor, and 18-year-old **Tasha Martin** face murder and child abuse charges in his death.

"Even though Joseph wasn't his father, he cared for him like a son," the elder Taylor said Monday at the apartment he shared with his son, **Martin** and Isaiah.

He said his son and **Martin** were still trying to cope with the loss of their 7-week-old daughter, Danielle Taylor, who died in September.

He and his daughter, Natalie Taylor, said the couple took Isaiah to Henry Ford Hospital on Friday because he had become very ill Thursday night. Isaiah had been given ginger ale and Pedialyte to help him rehydrate because he was vomiting, they said.

Isaiah was transferred to Children's Hospital of Michigan and pronounced dead Friday evening. The Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office ruled that the cause of death was blunt force trauma. Isaiah was bruised and suffering from numerous injuries.

Joseph Taylor's father pointed a finger at the state Department of Human Services. A social worker had come to the apartment several times since Danielle's death, he said, but counseling and other services that he said should have been provided were not.

Isaiah had been living with his maternal grandparents after the death, but recently returned home.

The Department of Human Services said it would open an investigation.

The younger Taylor had been laid off from a property-management company; **Martin** was trying to finish high school at West Side Academy in Detroit, said Natalie Taylor, 18.

Natalie Taylor said she finds it hard to believe her brother would have hurt Isaiah. "I've never seen Joseph whoop him," she said.

And, she said, **Martin** only gave Isaiah "taps on the leg" to correct him.

The apartment the family shared is one of four in a red-brick building on Tireman near I-96. Natalie Taylor lives across the hall of the building's second floor.

The elder Taylor said Isaiah shared a room with his mother and the younger Taylor. The walls of the room are mostly bare; at the foot of the bed, a TV set sits in a cabinet. Isaiah's toys and a stroller were stowed in a corner of the apartment's living room Monday.

Nearby is a family photo. **Martin** and Taylor are each holding a child.

Contact ERIC D. LAWRENCE at 313-223-4272 or elawrence@freepress.com.

What you can do

To report suspected child abuse, call 800-942-4357.

ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: Isaiah **Martin**, 2, died of blunt force trauma Friday. He was bruised and suffered from numerous injuries. His mother and her boyfriend face charges of child abuse and murder. Their 7-week-old daughter died in September.

CAPTIONWRITER: Family photo

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