

## POLICE THINK BOY IS STILL IN AREA

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**D'Wan Sims**, missing since Dec. 11, is in northwest Detroit or western Wayne County, Livonia police said Friday.

Police said they still hope to find him alive. Six officers Friday searched four hours for **D'Wan** in Grand Lawn Cemetery on Grand River near Telegraph in northwest Detroit.

But even if the 4-year-old boy is found, his mother, Dwanna Harris, could face other problems.

She and Kelly Lewis, a girlfriend in Miami, are being investigated as part of a welfare fraud prevention program, said Chris Tolia, assistant director of Florida's division of public assistance fraud. Florida welfare checks in Harris' name were cashed in the months after she said she moved back to Detroit.

It was unknown who cashed the checks, and neither woman has been accused nor charged with any crime. Both refused comment Friday.

Livonia police said the FBI has questioned Lewis, but they wouldn't specify the reason or comment on possible welfare fraud.

At Harris' request, Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services issued in her name more than \$2,200 in welfare and food stamps combined from August through December, Tolia said. Harris has said she moved back to Michigan in August.

Harris applied for the aid, spelling her son's last name as Simms, said Jennifer Lang, the agency's program administrator for economic services. Harris told Florida officials she lived with a Louis Kelly.

The monthly checks, issued in August through December, were for \$241 -- the maximum allowed for a mother and dependent with no reported income, Lang said. Harris was also sent about \$200 a month in food stamps, Tolia said.

The government assistance was mailed to Lewis' Miami address, the agency's records show. Harris has said she and **D'Wan** stayed with Lewis in July and August.

This week, the agency reviewed records and concluded that Harris no longer lives in Florida, Tolia said. On Tuesday, the agency stopped payment on the December check.

Cashing public assistance checks from another state is a felony punishable by up to five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine. First-time offenders typically are placed on probation and must pay back the money.

Tolia would not say who cashed the checks, where they were cashed, or whether Lewis or Kelly will be charged. He said Harris should have notified the agency's Dade County office when she returned to Detroit.

"It's the client's responsibility to come in and report that they are leaving," Tolia said Friday.

"We're more of a transient state. People come for short periods of time. A social service agency doesn't automatically know people have left."

Harris has told reporters she wanted to stay in Florida, but **D'Wan's** grandmother, Beverly Harris, said he couldn't cope with the climate. Beverly Harris has said her daughter had asked her to keep **D'Wan** with her in Detroit but she couldn't because she had to fulfill her military reservist requirement in Texas at the time. By the time Beverly Harris returned to Michigan, she said, her daughter and grandson also had returned. Three months later, Dwanna Harris reported her son missing.

Dwanna Harris said she lost her son at the Wonderland Mall in Livonia on Dec. 11. But police said he was never at the mall that day. And police have not found witnesses who saw Harris or **D'Wan** at the other places she said she visited that day.

Police searched two areas in Oakland County for **D'Wan** on Thursday, but their search has since narrowed based on the latest of the 850-plus tips they've received on a 24-hour hot line.

"We're encouraged by the type of tip we're receiving," Livonia Police Detective Lt. Pete Kunst said Friday. "We are getting calls from people who are more familiar with the neighborhood and people who knew **D'Wan**."

Friday afternoon, the United Cab Co. placed posters of **D'Wan** in its 26 cabs. Police have also distributed posters nationally.

"We're hopeful for a miracle by Christmas," Kunst said. "I think the whole community kind of has the same spirit of hoping that something would happen before Christmas."

Free Press Staff writers L.A. Johnson, David McHugh and correspondent Randi Sidmon contributed to this report.

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