

Who is to blame?

State DCYF official won't deny agency knew about abuse

By **KIMBERLY HOUGHTON**
Democrat Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — An official at the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Children, Youth and Families stated Friday that the agency is involved in the investigation of a local toddler's death, but would not state if it was contacted prior to her death.

"It is obvious that the death is a tragedy, and the circumstances make it even more difficult," said John Wallace, associate commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Health, and Human Services.

Wallace would not state when or why the Division of Children, Youth and Families became involved in the manslaughter case, which moved forward Thursday with the arrest of Chad E. Evans, 29, of 191 Milton Road. Evans was living with his girlfriend, Amanda Bortner, 18, and her 21-month-old daughter, Cassidy, at the time of the toddler's death.

Cassidy Bortner died Nov. 9 as a result of blunt force injury to her head, according to a preliminary autopsy report. Evans has been charged with recklessly causing Cassidy's death, but details of how the injury occurred has not been released by authorities.

When asked if the Division of Children, Youth and Families was contacted prior to Cassidy's death about allegations of abuse against the little girl, Wallace said he was not prepared to answer that question.

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COURTESY PHOTO
CASSIDY BORTNER died Nov. 9 as a result of blunt force injury to her head, according to a preliminary autopsy report.

Authorities look deeper for answers

By **TERESA ROBINSON**
Rochester Bureau Chief

ROCHESTER — While one man sits behind bars in connection with the beating death of a 21-month-old local girl, authorities are looking at other people who might be responsible.

The mother, Amanda Bortner, 18, has not been charged in connection with the incident.

Her boyfriend, however, Chad E. Evans, 29, is charged with manslaughter in connection with Cassidy Bortner's death. He was arraigned Friday in Rochester District Court and is being held without bail at the Strafford County Jail.

Evans and Bortner lived together at 191 Milton Road at the time of Cassidy's death. Bortner has since moved from the residence.

Preliminary autopsy results indicate the girl died as a result of blunt force injury to the head, according to a release from the New Hampshire attorney general.

Evans is charged with manslaughter for "recklessly causing Cassidy's death by inflicting blunt trauma," the attorney general said.

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Family prepares for funeral as suspect faces charges

By **JENNIFER L. SAUNDERS**
Democrat Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — As the family of 21-month-old Cassidy Bortner gathers in Maine to prepare for her funeral, the man accused of beating her to death is being held without bail.

In a photograph given to Foster's Daily Democrat by a relative, the toddler smiles out at the world, her blue eyes full of hope.

In reality, however, authorities are painting a picture of senseless abuse, which culminated in the death of an innocent, helpless child.

Police have charged 29-year-old Chad E. Evans of 191 Milton Road — the boyfriend of Cassidy's mother — with manslaughter. Police allege the child's death Nov. 9 at York Hospital in York, Maine, was the direct result of abuse inflicted by Evans. While the Maine state medical examiner has not released an official cause of death, the New Hampshire attorney general's office has said the preliminary autopsy results indicate the little girl died from blunt force injury to her head.



CHAD EVANS

"She was extremely young and she was defenseless," New Hampshire Assistant Attorney General Christopher Carter said of little Cassidy. "It defies any reason."

The investigation is continuing, and based on that fact and the effort to ensure Evans has a fair trial, few specific details about the case could be released, Carter said.

As of Friday, the mother, Amanda Bortner, 18, who lived with Evans at the Milton Road residence, had not been

charged with any crime in connection with her daughter's death. Carter and Maine State Police Sgt. Matthew Stewart, one of the primary investigators of this case that has spanned both states, would not comment whether Bortner was present on Nov. 8 and Nov. 9, the dates Evans allegedly inflicted the fatal injuries on her child.

Stewart did say, however, that the investigation is continuing in both Maine and New Hampshire.

"We are working to piece together the

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Six injured in collision



Students target of Web site threats

Somersworth High troubled by content of Internet chat room

By **ANDREW MORSE**
Somersworth Bureau Chief

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ney general's statement said. The injury occurred either Nov. 8 or Nov. 9 in Rochester.

The toddler died Nov. 10 after being taken from the Kittery, Maine, home of Bortner's sister, Jennifer Conley, and Conley's boyfriend, F. Jeffrey Marshall, who periodically baby-sat Cassidy.

Authorities said the investigation into the toddler's death is not over, and they will try to piece together Cassidy's life, concentrating on the last few days.

Other allegations of abuse will also be pursued, they said.

"This investigation will continue on both sides of the border," Maine State Police Sgt. Matthew Stewart said at a press conference after Evans' arraignment Friday. The investigation to date, he said, "has led this team effort to believe the

injuries that caused the death of Cassidy were inflicted here in New Hampshire, in the city of Rochester."

Neither Stewart nor New Hampshire Assistant Attorney General Christopher Carter would comment on Amanda Bortner's whereabouts at the time Evan allegedly abused the little girl.

The investigation involves many law enforcement agencies in both Maine and New Hampshire, including the New Hampshire attorney general, both New Hampshire and Maine state police, Kittery, Maine, police and Rochester police.

"All police agencies in Maine and New Hampshire are committed to ensuring that the case is resolved appropriately," Carter said.

Authorities would not comment on the investigation or confirm

whether others, including Bortner, could be charged. They also would not specify what statutes would apply to the case.

However, the Child Protection Act's Reporting Law, RSA 169-C:29, states that suspicions of abuse or neglect are required to be reported.

The law focuses on people such as doctors, teachers and child-care providers, but includes a statement that "any other person having reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected shall report the same."

Someone violating the law could be charged with a misdemeanor, according to another section of the Child Protection Act.

Democrat staff writers Kimberly Houghton and Jennifer L. Saunders contributed to this story.

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He did say, however, that he would not confirm or deny that the agency was notified before Cassidy's death last week at a Kittery, Maine residence.

"We have some connection with the family," Wallace said. "It is obvious we have some connection with the people involved in this case, but we are reviewing all of the circumstances."

At the request of the Division of Children, Youth and Families,

Evans' ex-wife, Tristan Evans of Dover, filed a request Wednesday for an emergency restraining order between Chad Evans and their 3-year-old son.

The request was made at the Strafford County Superior Court and denied by Judge Peter Fauver.

Although the request was denied, Fauver gave the mother sole custody of her son, allowing only supervised visitation by

Evans, who is now being held at the Strafford County Jail without bail. The two parents previously had joint custody of the boy prior to Wednesday's court order.

Wallace would not explain why the Division of Children, Youth and Families recommended that Tristan Evans file the emergency no-contact order between her son and his father.

"I am not in a position to comment on that," Wallace said.

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details of Cassidy Bortner's life in the days, weeks and months leading up to her death," Carter said Friday. "We are seeking some measure of justice in this utterly senseless act."

"Right now we're focusing on Cassidy," said F. Jeffrey Marshall of Rogers Road in Kittery, who lives with Cassidy's aunt, Jennifer Conley. He said he has his opinions

according to police. Marshall, who was the man who called Kittery police seeking emergency medical services on Nov. 9, was the last family member to see the child alive. Officials have indicated Cassidy was brought to the Kittery residence on the morning of Nov. 9 and that Marshall called police that afternoon when the little girl's health took a "dramatic decline."

injuries, he said.

During the arraignment in Rochester District Court on Friday morning, Evans sat with his lawyer on the left side of the courtroom. Conley and Marshall were also in court. Later in the day, Marshall said they felt they had to be there for Cassidy.

The child's mother was not present for the proceedings.