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POWER


Boy's death ruled homicide

He was struck with object, officials say

BY JACK KRESNAK • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JANUARY 26, 2007

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The death of a 2-year-old foster child was ruled a homicide Friday after Wayne County medical examiners determined the boy had been struck by a blunt object.

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Isaac Lethbridge died Wednesday at Children's Hospital of Michigan after he stopped breathing in a Detroit foster home.

Detroit police were investigating and no arrests had been made.

Investigators for the state Department of Human Services were reviewing case files at the Lula Belle Stewart Center in Detroit, which licensed the foster home in the 18000 block of Greenlawn where Isaac lost consciousness.

The foster mother, Charlise Rogers, has said that she does not know why Isaac stopped breathing.

Child Protective Services investigators removed Rogers' two minor children, ages 20 months and 12 years, from her home, as well as Isaac's 4-year-old sister, who was in foster care there. Rogers' home was the third foster care placement for Isaac and his sister, who were removed from their parents' Westland home last September because of the filthy condition of the home. The sister now is in her fourth foster home.

Isaac's parents, Matt and Jennifer Lethbridge, said their attorney had advised them not to comment.

Janet Burch, a retired DHS division director who became interim executive director of the Lula

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Belle Stewart Center on Aug. 1, said everyone at the agency feels hurt by what happened to Isaac.

"Our goal is to keep children safe," Burch said Friday. "We take it personally all the way up the line. We'd like to express our sympathy to the family and to all those people who are connected to the family."

Burch said she is investigating the incident, "but right now I don't have anything I can share."

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

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