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Doctors differ on 17-pound 2-year-old

Holden parents go to court in July

By Aaron Nicodemus TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

HOLDEN— A couple accused of nearly starving their 2-year-old son to death are facing charges of reckless child endangerment.

Kellie and Joshua Theriault, of Holden, are scheduled to appear in Leominster District Court on July 21 to face allegations that they nearly starved their son to death. The charge is a misdemeanor.

The case began in February when an anonymous person called the emergency Department of Social Services hotline and reported a young boy with bruises on his face.

Holden Police Officer Thomas Monahan went to the two-family home at 1588 Main St. to check out the complaint for DSS, according to a police report that was included in court records. Officer Monahan saw the bruises on the boy and reported his findings to DSS.

At the time, at 2-1/2 years of age, the boy weighed 17 pounds.

DSS responded by removing the boy and his three siblings from their parents. Yesterday, DSS spokeswoman Alison Goodwin said the boy and his siblings remain in foster care. DSS reported in court records that the boy has gained weight and is growing normally in foster care, and has improved in all areas in which he had been delayed.

The case is complicated by the conflicting testimony of two doctors who have examined the child.

Dr. Rebecca Moles, director of the Child Protection Program at UMass Memorial Medical Center, examined the boy after DSS removed him from the Theriaults' home, according to court records. Dr. Moles wrote that if the boy had not been removed from the house, he would have died.

She called it the worst case of malnutrition she had ever seen.

Dr. Moles, through a UMass spokeswoman, declined to comment.

The boy's family doctor offered a starkly different assessment of the child's condition.

Dr. William J. Blake of Holden wrote in a letter to the court saying that there is nothing wrong with the child, and that he is just undersized.

When contacted by the Telegram & Gazette, Dr. Blake said he could not speak about the case, citing



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The couple's lawyer, Thomas Duiney of Boston, yesterday called the charges "ridiculous," and has filed a motion to dismiss.

The clerk magistrate has found probable cause, but an arraignment scheduled for June 19 was postponed. The couple is now scheduled to be in Leominster District Court on July 21.

Timothy J. Connolly, spokesman for Worcester District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr., said the DA's office has been following the case closely.

"We feel this is a case that should go forward," he said.

Holden Police Chief George R. Sherrill deferred all comments to Early's office.

Yesterday, dozens of toys were piled neatly on the front porch of the two-family home in Jefferson, a section of Holden. There were more toys in the backyard.

Two attempts to speak to the Theriaults yesterday were rebuffed.

Both times, a reporter could hear someone in the home, but no one answered the door or responded to a note left requesting comment.



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