

Fairfield day care death: Parents feel betrayed

By Genevieve Reilly

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FAIRFIELD — When they thought their 4-month-old son, Adam, died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Matthew Seagull said he could “accept it, but didn’t understand it.”

When he and his wife, Michelle, learned that Adam had been overdosed on Benadryl, “I could understand it, but I couldn’t accept it.”

The Shelton couple spoke about their son, who died March 22 while in the care of an unlicensed home day care, Thursday afternoon at the Bridgeport office of their attorney, Kathleen Nastri.

Earlier that day, Carol Cardillo, the woman who ran the day care out of her Edgewood Road home for 11 years, was arrested by Fairfield police and charged with second-degree manslaughter, second-degree reckless endangerment and risk of injury to a minor.

Expressing their gratitude to the police and the Department of Children and Families for their work on the investigation, the couple said Cardillo’s alleged actions were a betrayal.

Cardillo called 911 around 3 p.m. on that day in March because Adam was unresponsive, after being put down for a nap around noontime. Michelle Seagull, a school teacher in Ansonia, said Cardillo called her mother — who then called Matthew Seagull — with the news that their son was having trouble breathing.

Michelle Seagull then called the day care, and a Fairfield police officer got on the phone. “The police officer told me he was unresponsive,” she said, and on the drive to St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport, where Adam was taken, “I did not have a good feeling. We trusted Carol. She betrayed that trust.”

Drugs like Benadryl are not supposed to be given to children under the age of 2. Michelle and Matthew Seagull said their son had not been given any medications during his short life, and they definitely did not give Cardillo any permission to do so.

“All she had to do was call,” Michelle Seagull said. “One of us would have come and gotten him.”

Due to Adam's age, an autopsy was mandated by state law, Natri said. Learning the results — the cause of death was acute diphenhydramine intoxication and the manner was homicide — was like he died “all over again,” the couple said.

Natri said the important issue for the Seagulls is making sure that all day care centers, licensed or unlicensed, are safe, and that Cardillo is punished. She said no decision has been made at this time about a civil suit against Cardillo, and right now, they are focused on helping in the case against Cardillo.

“We've left open all options,” Natri said.

For Matthew Seagull, watching friends' children hit milestones reminds him of what milestones Adam would be at, if he were still alive.

“We miss him every day,” Matthew Seagull said. “It's the promise of what might have been.”

They try, Michelle Seagull said, “to live each day in honor of our son. We just live each day for Adam.”

Any thoughts of having another child, she said, have been put off for now.

“The four months with him were the best four months of our lives,” Michelle Seagull said.

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