



HUMBOLDT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
PAUL V. GALLEGOS • DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Criminal Division • tel (707) 445-7411 • fax (707) 445-7416 • 825 5th Street, Eureka, CA 95501
Victim Witness Assistance • tel (707) 445-7417 • fax (707) 445-7490 • 712 4th Street, Eureka, CA 95501

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Re: Maggie Wortmon Pleads to Voluntary Manslaughter

Date: February 6, 2012

Contact: District Attorney Paul Gallegos

Phone: (707) 268-2571, (707) 267-4400

Maggie Jean Wortmon, 27, of Eureka, pleaded guilty today to voluntary manslaughter, admitting she engaged in conduct that directly caused the death of her infant son, Michael Acosta III. The child's autopsy revealed that the baby had been exposed to high levels of methamphetamine.

Prosecutor Ben McLaughlin offered Wortmon a plea, indicating that he planned to refile the murder charge with additional evidence if the plea was not accepted. "There was every indication that Wortmon knew she was placing Michael in grave danger by exposing him to methamphetamine, yet she continued to do so," he said.

The Humboldt County District Attorney's Office is the first prosecuting agency in the state of California, and perhaps the nation, to obtain a conviction of voluntary manslaughter for exposing a child to toxic levels of methamphetamine. "We were absolutely going to hold her accountable," McLaughlin added. "In my mind, Wortmon's conduct rose to the level of a voluntary homicide because it is far more serious than merely "endangering" one's child. I think we've finally reached a point where this sort of conduct, causing a child's death by subjecting him or her to hard drugs and the associated lifestyle, needs to be considered a homicide."

Wortmon also admitted to a violation of probation stemming from a previous drug related conviction. She is scheduled to be sentenced March 5, 2012 at 2 p.m. by the Honorable W. Bruce Watson and faces up to 11 years in California State Prison for the manslaughter plea and an additional eight months for the probation violation. She could also receive probation.

Humboldt County District Attorney Paul Gallegos said, "Our initial assessment indicated that her conduct warranted a murder charge, but the court disagreed, indicating that there was not sufficient evidence of malice. I accept that. However, she engaged in a lifestyle that knowingly and foreseeably exposed her child to the risk of death. This was a great tragedy. A completely preventable tragedy."