

Slain girl 'failed' by system, advocate says

KATE HAMMER

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By the age of 7, Katelynn Sampson was failed by at least two child service agencies and all the protections they are meant to offer, according to her family and the provincial child advocate.

Katelynn was found dead Sunday morning in the second-floor apartment of a woman who had been entrusted with her care through the hands of the Children's Aid Society and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, according to her mother, Bernice Sampson.

The woman, Donna Irving, was charged Sunday with second-degree murder and remains in police custody.

The round-faced third-grader slept on a bedroom floor and showed signs that she was assaulted on an ongoing basis, according to police.

With both agencies declining to comment on their involvement in Katelynn's case yesterday, exactly how the young girl slipped through cracks in the protocol and routine protections provided by child-service agencies remained unclear.

Meanwhile, the darkest details of her short life emerged through an autopsy performed at the Hospital for Sick Children.

By evening, results were not available because, according to homicide Detective Sergeant Steve Ryan, the severity and nature

of her injuries had caused the autopsy to take longer than expected.

He called the state of the child's body "probably the worst thing I've seen in 20 years of policing."

Irwin Elman, chief advocate for the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, said: "There are a number of points of protection and they all failed for Katelynn.

Child Welfare has what's thought to be a pretty strict screening process."

That process generally includes a background check and a home inspection. But Donna Irving has "violent crimes on her record," Det. Sgt. Ryan said.

A spokesperson for CAS said confidentiality restrictions prevented discussion of Katelynn's case and referred reporters to the Native Child and Family Services agency.

"We are particularly concerned that Native Child and Family Services had something to do with the placement of Katelynn with Donna Irving," said Kenn Richard, the agency's executive director, adding that an internal review was being conducted.

Yesterday evening, investigators began a search of Ms. Irving's apartment and appealed to those with knowledge of Katelynn's life or any abuse to contact police.