

Boyfriend of dead girl's mom has dark past

CPS had investigated him before little girl's death

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Harris County Sheriff's Office

Lucas Ruric Coe's criminal history includes assault with a deadly weapon and injury to a child.

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The boyfriend of the Spring woman whose 4-year-old daughter died after being beaten and sexually assaulted has a lengthy history with Texas Child Protective Services as well as criminal records for assault with a deadly weapon, criminal mischief and injury to a child, records obtained by the Houston Chronicle show.

Before Emma Thompson's June 27 death, CPS officials had investigated him not once but three times in unrelated cases involving another girlfriend's child.

But child abuse workers said they never knew Lucas Ruric Coe, 27, had been in the same house as Abigail Young and her three children.

It would take Emma's death before CPS learned the truth from Young: that she had been dating Coe since last December. The revelation came this week during a custody hearing in which Young's other two daughters were placed with her estranged husband and his parents.

When CPS was notified June 8 that Emma had blisters on her hands, inside her mouth and in her genital area, investigators were sent to interview Young and examine Emma and her two sisters, ages 11 and 6.

When tests confirmed the young girl had herpes, Young, a registered nurse, said she lived alone with her children, and that no one other than her estranged husband and day care workers had access to Emma, CPS spokeswoman Estella Olguin said.

"Throughout the investigation, Ms. Young denied that anyone other than her and her husband and the day care (center) had access to her children," Olguin said. "She denied seeing anybody else or having a boyfriend."

Where investigation stands

So far no one has been charged in the month-old death. Harris County investigators are waiting for the preliminary results of Emma's autopsy, performed 34 days ago in Conroe, before making any arrests.

The girl, who had suffered a skull fracture, a severed pancreas, and vaginal tearing, evidence of sexual assault, was dead by the time she reached a hospital.

"The Harris County Sheriff's Office-Homicide Division is patiently awaiting autopsy results from the Southeast Texas Forensic Center in Conroe before approaching the District Attorney's Office with charges in this case," said Lt. John Legg, spokesman for the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

"The investigation is ongoing. No one at this time has been officially named nor ruled out as a possible suspect."

Young has denied having anything to do with her daughter's death. A woman who answered the door at Coe's mother's home in Waller on Thursday said Coe would have no comment.

Awaiting trial

CPS investigated Coe as a possible perpetrator three times — in 2005, 2006 and 2007 — all involving the son of another girlfriend. He has been indicted on charges of injuring that child; the case has yet to come to trial in Montgomery County. The indictment accuses Coe of striking the boy on the head and body with his hand in July 2007, according to prosecutor Frank Barnett.

In January 2005, CPS first investigated injuries to a Magnolia boy, then 5, which included two black eyes, bruising on one cheek, a bruise on his back and a light bruise on one of his buttocks, said CPS spokeswoman Gwen Carter. Coe was living with the boy and his mother.

When CPS discovered the boy's injuries, he was removed from the home.

"What we found was his injuries were not consistent with the explanation given" for how they occurred, Carter said. The case was closed in August 2005 when the mother reported her relationship with Coe had ended.

Same boy, three times

Coe came to CPS' attention again in 2006 when more injuries on the same boy were reported.

This time, the child had bruises to his face, ears, shoulders and chest, as well as a busted lip. He told caseworkers another child at school hurt him and he had fallen, but he also said Coe had twisted his ears. Coe and the child's mother denied bruising the boy, Carter said.

CPS concluded no abuse occurred and closed the case.

"Looking at it, I think there's some follow-up that should have been done," Carter said of the case. "Just reading this, I think there's some things the caseworker should have gone more in depth with, knowing the history."

Coe appears for the third time in March 2007 when the agency investigated a complaint of physical and emotional abuse to the same boy, then 7. Again, more bruises.

CPS discovered the boy living with Coe, along with a 2-year-old girl that Coe had fathered with the boy's mother. The agency took custody of both children, who later went to live with grandparents.

Criminal history

Coe's extensive CPS history is matched by a long criminal history.

In addition to the indictment on charges of injuring the boy, Coe has previously been arrested on other charges in Montgomery, Harris and Galveston counties, including aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, two driving while intoxicated cases and criminal mischief, records show.

He served six years of probation that ended in March for a December 2002 aggravated assault case in Harris County. Tomball police Detective Ron McGullion said Coe was arrested after intentionally crashing his vehicle into a car occupied by several people, badly breaking one man's leg, during a fight over a woman in an Academy store's parking lot.

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