

Philadelphia Faith-Healing Parents Charged in Death of Baby

A Philadelphia couple was charged on Wednesday in the death of their infant son, the second of their children who prosecutors say died after his parents prayed over him instead of seeking medical attention.

Herbert and Catherine Schaible, who belong to a church that authorities say believes in faith healing, could face up to 40 years in prison each if convicted on the third-degree murder charges filed against them by the Philadelphia District Attorney's office.

Their 7-month-old son Brandon died on April 18 after becoming ill with bacterial pneumonia, dehydration and strep, District Attorney R. Seth Williams said at a news conference.

In 2009, another Schaible child, Kent, age 2, also died of bacterial pneumonia, he said.

Authorities said the parents refused to get medical treatment for Kent and were sentenced to 10 years probation.

Prosecutors said they will seek to have the probation revoked. Williams said a condition of the probation was that the parents must seek medical attention if any of their children became ill.

The couple has seven other children, all of them older, who were placed in foster care following Brandon's death, authorities said.

"The death of 7-month-old Brandon Schaible is a tragedy," Williams said. "Sadly there is only one reason for it—the criminal actions of the parents."

“Instead of caring for and nurturing him, they ultimately caused his death by praying over his body instead of taking him to the doctor,” Williams said.

The Schaibles are members of the First Century Gospel Church in North Philadelphia, prosecutors said.

Neither the church nor defense attorneys for the Schaibles could be reached for comment.

In addition to third-degree murder, the parents were charged with involuntary manslaughter, conspiracy and endangering the welfare of a child.

Editing by Ellen Wulfhorst and David Gregorio

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