

Appendix 9: SSRIs and Maternal Filicides
20 of roughly 300 accounts on SSRI Stories.org

1. Noera Ayaz fought against domestic violence, then apparently killed her sons and herself. Her family struggles to understand why — (The Washington Post)

By Justin Jouvenal January 1, 2019

Kate Schubert remembers Noera Ayaz as one of the best moms she had ever known. Schubert was looking for a playgroup for her son after moving to Qatar in 2009 when she found Ayaz's "Storytime Under the Trees."

Ayaz commandeered a choice spot in a Doha park, where kids would frolic, eat healthy snacks and listen to book readings. Schubert considered Ayaz such a role model that she consulted her during her next pregnancy.

Ayaz was a professional pillar, too. After returning to the United States, she won plaudits as a lawyer working with immigrant Muslim women who were seeking refuge from domestic abuse, part of two decades of charity work.

Schubert said that background makes it so hard to understand what came next. In early September, Ayaz and her two sons were found fatally shot in their house in Herndon, Va. Police are still investigating but say they think Ayaz, 42, killed the boys and then herself.

Schubert said she is haunted by the case. So are some members of Ayaz's family and community, who are still reeling and trying to fit together pieces that don't seem to match. Her family said she left no note.

"I cannot reconcile the Noera I knew with the tragic story of her death," Schubert wrote in an email.

The case is all the more unusual because it breaks a grim mold. About 90 percent of the perpetrators who carried out murder-suicides in the first half of 2017 were men, and the majority of the victims were wives or girlfriends, according to the most recent data on the phenomenon by the Violence Policy Center. Cases in which mothers kill their children are rare.

The weeks since the deaths have provided some clues, but much remains murky. Fairfax County police have not released a motive, and Ayaz's husband, the sole surviving member of the immediate family, said he is not ready to talk and has not shared key details with Noera's relatives.

That has left people like Schubert and Yasir Ayaz, Noera Ayaz's brother, to try to figure out answers. Yasir Ayaz said he wishes he had access to the police report and his sister's journal, but police said those items can be shared only by her husband, who is her official next of kin.

"I want to understand what happened," Ayaz said. "There are other families that might be going through such things. If some of the evidence becomes clear, you can help some of these families. We can't reverse the situation that occurred, but we can try to prevent similar situations."

Ayaz said he learned after Noera's death that she had been suffering from depression and had been in treatment for about six months. He said she was taking antidepressants. She also had stopped responding to his texts and phone calls in the weeks before the shootings.

Ayaz Lari, Noera and Yasir's father, had visited the family in recent months and had a pleasant time. He recalled Noera's sons, Tihami, 11, and Miraaj, 9, beating their grandparents at chess.

"They were even brighter than Noera," Lari said. "I couldn't believe it, they were so smart."

The last time Lari talked to his daughter in the weeks before her death, she told him she wasn't feeling well and had been working late nights. Her husband also called with concerns about her mental health, but Lari said the depth of her problems remained masked.

"I had no idea what was cooking," Lari said.

That veil carried right through the day of the killings. Yasir Ayaz said that on Sept. 5, his sister went out to lunch with her husband and some friends at Taco Bell. Nothing seemed amiss, but Lari said he now knows that his daughter had purchased the gun used in the killings the day before.

Lari said that on the evening of Sept. 5, he received a call from his son-in-law after he arrived home from work. "I see the children in blood," Lari said the husband told him. "I'm going to call 911."

When officers arrived, they found Ayaz in an upstairs bathroom. First responders attempted to revive the children, but the mother and sons were pronounced dead.

In the days that followed, Ayaz's husband and relatives put out a statement saying they were "shocked and devastated."

"Noera was a devoted mother, a dedicated attorney, and a champion for the rights of women everywhere," it said. "Noera will be remembered for her warmth, wisdom, and artistic spirit."

Her husband and family set up a charity fund that has raised about \$10,000. Murder-suicides are often met by public silence, but the Web page for the fund has drawn an outpouring of support.

Noera Ayaz lived a "noble and generous life," one donor said. Another offered, "What I learned from her will always live in my heart," and another said that Ayaz "was an inspiration to many."

Ayaz had been the director of Women in Islam, a group that worked to empower Muslim women. Lari said his daughter had spent two decades largely doing charity work for various organizations, including most recently for Just Neighbors in Annandale, Va.

Before that, she worked in intellectual property law for the firm Baker Botts. Her father said she had worked for former secretary of state James A. Baker after he stepped down from public life. She also traveled widely.

There is little research on women who carry out murder-suicides because the overwhelming number of such perpetrators are men. David Adams, co-director of Emerge, a domestic-violence counseling program in Massachusetts, said men and women engage in the acts for different reasons.

“With men, it’s pretty typically a scenario where they are possessively jealous and looking to punish a partner for thinking about leaving them or having left them,” Adams said. “For women, it’s sort of operating out of hopelessness and despondency.”

2. Mum whose 18-month-old son died plunging from sixth-floor of Bradford tower block is spared jail — (The Sun)

By Neal Baker, 15th June 2018, 4:00 pm

'NOT A BAD MUM' - A MUM who thought God told her to drop her 18-month-old son from a block of flats has today been given an indefinite hospital order.

Gemma Procter was suffering from paranoid schizophrenia when she threw toddler Elliot from the sixth-storey in Bradford, West Yorks last October. Procter pleaded guilty to manslaughter with diminished responsibility after her son Elliot's death in October.

She was convinced that voices in her head were telling her to sacrifice her son, who died from his injuries.

Procter pleaded guilty to manslaughter with diminished responsibility in April after initially facing a murder charge at Bradford Crown Court.

But psychiatry assessments found she had been suffering from the acute mental disorder.

Procter had been remanded in custody until sentencing today amid what Judge Jonathan Durham Hall QC called "massive interest" in the case.

Judge Hall today described it as a "tragic" case, and told her: "You are not a bad mum. You were not a bad mother to Elliot."

The court heard how Procter had been treated for depression following Elliot's birth, but was unaware of the severity of her illness.

3. Brit mum, 41, charged with murder after her son, 8, is found 'suffocated with a pillow' in Australia — (The Sun)

By Mark Hodge, 9th March 2018, 8:30 am

Brodie Moran was allegedly murdered by his mother Joanne Finch at their home in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday.

A BRITISH mother has been charged with murder after allegedly suffocating her eight-year-old son to death at their peaceful seaside home in Australia.

Joanne Finch, 41, allegedly smothered her son Brodie Moran with a pillow at their rented property in south-east Melbourne yesterday.

Joanne Finch allegedly suffocated little Brodie, centre, with a pillow at their home in Melbourne.

Brodie's dad Lee Moran, who is also British and is currently based in Shanghai, posted a heartbreaking tribute to his "always happy" boy this morning, reports 9news.com.au.

He wrote: "Thank you to everyone that has sent well wishes.

"At the moment I feel empty, still in shock. I have lost the best part of me... words can not describe how much I love and miss my little fella."

The family is believed to have lived in the UK before the child moved to Melbourne with his mother.

She was refused bail at a hearing at Melbourne Magistrates Court where she was charged with one count of murder.

The British woman revealed in court that she requires a daily dose of antidepressant drug Effexor, reports Yahoo.

Local residents said the child lived with his mother and a man at the home, which they had rented for about a year in the city's Tootgarook area.

4. Mother accused of murdering her baby son allegedly gave him anti-depressants — (WalesOnline)

Elwyn Roberts, 11:12, 4 AUG 2017

Hannah Turtle, 22, is accused of murdering her seven-week-old little boy James Hughes

A mother accused of poisoning and murdering her baby son allegedly gave him anti-depressants, a court heard.

Hannah Turtle, 22, is due to stand trial next year accused of murdering seven-week-old son James Hughes.

Turtle, from Shotton in Flintshire, appeared for a preliminary hearing at Mold Crown Court on Friday.

She is charged with murder, three counts of ill-treatment, and two of administering poison.

Judge Eleri Rees, who appeared via a live television link from Cardiff Crown Court, fixed a plea hearing on October 4.

A provisional trial date was listed for January 29 next year. It is expected to last three weeks.

Turtle, who had been living at Llanarth Hospital in Abergavenny but is now of no fixed abode, was further remanded in custody.

Defending barrister Dafydd Roberts said there were many issues to be explored.

The judge said that investigations had been carried out for some time and the prosecution case was now ready.

One of the poison charges relates to allegedly administering an anti-depressant drug to James between May 31 and June 5 last year.

He was taken to hospital from the family home in Ryeland Street, Shotton, on June 9 and died four days later on June 13.

He was initially treated at the Countess of Chester Hospital and was then transferred to Liverpool's Alder Hey Children's Hospital where he died.

5. Jerusalem Murder-suicide: Woman Killed Her Four Daughters Before Starting Fire, Autopsy Shows — (Haaretz)

Nir Hasson and Ido Efrati, Jan 03, 2017 10:04 AM

There are concerns of copycat incidents following extensive media coverage of the tragedy. Friends of the woman who died Sunday along with her four daughters gathered Monday at the Jerusalem school where two of the girls studied, unable to explain the tragedy.

Police initially suspected a murder-suicide, and an autopsy on two of the children on Monday revealed that they had been strangled. Police believe the mother – who has not been named – killed her children and then set their room on fire. She was found outside, after seemingly committing suicide.

However, her friends said Monday that while it was known that the mother suffered from emotional problems, she had shown no signs of distress in recent days and had been functioning well.

"I knew the mother well," said one of the moms whose child was in the same class as the two girls. "She was devoted, there aren't mothers like her – I'm not as devoted to my children as she was."

"She wouldn't let her daughters go to friends after school, because she wanted them to come home and have lunch," she added. "My daughters saw her as a second mother and she really was like one to them. She was head and shoulders above the rest. Last Thursday, she asked for some notes to prepare for an exam scheduled for this week."

"It was obviously difficult for her, but we didn't notice anything unusual," added another mother. "There were no warning signs – it was 10 minutes of losing it. Maybe it came after she spent a whole week with them during their Hanukkah vacation. It was hard on her," added another mother.

The father of the children had originally refused for the autopsy to be performed on his children. However, following an agreement reached with him, only a partial autopsy was performed on the two older siblings at the Abu Kabir Institute of Forensic Medicine, Tel Aviv.

The father's lawyer said he agreed to this in order to prevent legal proceedings over the police request.

"The father and family are totally devastated," said his lawyer. "He's in a Jerusalem hotel surrounded by family members and social workers. No one imagined this, there were no early signs. It's only in retrospect that can you decipher the things that happened."

A social worker is with the father, as well as the mother's parents and sister. "There are issues of guilt, directed at themselves and external agencies, questioning those who didn't diagnose or treat the issue. There were attempts to help but they were unsuccessful, but no one buried their head in the sand," the social worker said.

There are concerns of copycat incidents following extensive media coverage of the tragedy. The police and welfare services received several calls from concerned family members on Monday. Jerusalem teachers, social workers and nurses will be briefed in coming days on how to be on the alert.

The mother was treated by psychiatric services in Jerusalem recently. She turned to one center a few weeks ago due to depression. She was not determined as posing a risk to herself or others around her, or as having early signs of suicidal tendencies.

The incident will now be evaluated, with the diagnosis and treatment examined in depth. The chain of events is not clear at this point, likewise the mother's mental state at the time of the incident. However, there are questions regarding the psychiatric system's ability to detect in advance serious cases that pose potential risks.

"Cases of murder and suicide are rare, and cause public anxiety and puzzlement due to the difficulty in detecting them," said Prof. Gil Zalsman, head of the Geha Mental Health Center, Petah Tikva. "A mother who murders her children almost always suffers from serious mental problems, according to the professional literature."

Zalsman added that "in cases in which a mother murders her children and commits suicide, there is usually a psychotic depression, or a psychotic state due to schizophrenia. In such cases, a person is dissociated from reality and in a delusional state, with impaired judgement," said Zalsman.

He added that this case showed the importance of early diagnosis of distress and depression, and also the importance of attention and intervention by caregivers, physicians and family members.

"They have to ask a person in distress if they have suicidal or aggressive feelings. We now know that asking the question doesn't give them ideas, and in cases where there are such ideas, the question can save lives," said Zalsman.

6. A Mother's Very, Very Worst Nightmare — (Mad In America)

By Cindy Perlin, December 10, 2016

A parent's worst nightmare is the death of their child. What happened to Marci Webber is worse. Marci experienced a paranoid psychotic episode brought on by psychiatric medication. She emerged from the psychotic episode to learn that she had killed her four year old daughter Maggie, whom she loved and cherished, and had tried to kill herself.

Now confined indefinitely at a state hospital for those found Not Guilty By Reason of Insanity, Marci wants to warn the public about the dangers of psychiatric medications and seeks justice for herself and her family. She has asked me to share her story.

Marci was a struggling 43 year old single mother of three girls when the tragedy occurred. She was living in upstate NY and was on medical leave from Albany Law School where she was pursuing joint masters of social work/J.D. Juris doctorate of law degrees. She is an honorably discharged Army veteran and has been a volunteer for many nonprofits benefitting children in her community.

Marci had been under a great deal of stress for many years. To help her deal with the stress, Marci's doctors prescribed an ever-increasing array of psychiatric drugs which included two antidepressants (Wellbutrin 300mg and Zoloft 200mg), an antipsychotic (Seroquel 100mg) for sleep and another sleep medication (Ambien 10mg), as well as a blood pressure medication (Metoprolol 100mg) for calming.

Although Marci didn't realize it at the time, this untested combination of drugs was actually exacerbating, not decreasing, her stress and anxiety, and causing cognitive and memory problems along with unexplained physical symptoms.

In September of 2010, Marci took Maggie to visit her mother and eldest daughter Mallory in Illinois. Her primary care physician, who was prescribing her psychiatric medication, had not seen her since January, 2010 but continued to renew Marci's prescriptions. She failed to renew Marci's Zoloft 200mg prescription, however, which had been last filled for a 30 day supply on July 27.

Marci returned briefly to New York and then went back to Illinois. By the time Marci returned to Illinois, her mother and 18 year old daughter Mallory noticed that Marci was not herself. She was nervous and worried that people were after her. Marci also had flu-like symptoms of aches and pains, fatigue, sweating and cramping. Her family members were concerned because they didn't understand what was happening, but they were not alarmed because Marci had never been dangerous. In fact, Marci was experiencing symptoms of psychiatric medication withdrawal, which can cause flu-like symptoms as well as paranoia, psychosis, suicidal and homicidal behaviors. No one had warned her or her family members that this could happen.

Marci believed she had left all her medications at home and tried to get her prescriptions filled at the Walmart in Illinois. She was told that they were unable to fill the prescriptions due to a New York law that prevented her doctor from calling in or faxing the prescriptions. Her primary care doctor said she should wait for the prescriptions to be mailed to her. No

one warned Marci about the dangers of abrupt withdrawal. No one assessed her mental state or asked if she had withdrawal symptoms or advised her to go to a hospital.

Marci returned to her mother's home and became more paranoid and delusional. She believed that an Illuminati internet sex ring was going to kidnap Maggie and sell her into sexual slavery then kill her during a satanic ritual, sending Maggie's soul to hell for eternity. In this irrational, confused, psychotic state she killed her daughter to save her from this fate and then tried to kill herself. Her daughter Mallory found her dead sister and her wounded mother and called 911.

I also immediately contacted the public defender assigned to Marci's case and informed him of my suspicions. I sent him articles and books and the names of psychiatrists (including Dr. Peter Breggin and Dr. Joseph Glenmullen) who were knowledgeable about psychiatric drug-induced homicide and suicide. The public defender refused to bring up this issue at Marci's trial and strongly advised Marci and her family not to file a wrongful death lawsuit, claiming it would jeopardize her criminal case. Shortly after the homicide, I was contacted by detectives investigating the case. I was Marci's former psychotherapist. I had not treated Marci for two years but I was still occasionally in touch with her. When I heard what had happened, I immediately informed the detectives that I suspected that the homicide and suicide attempt were related to psychiatric drugs. At that point I had known Marci intimately for 8 years and had known her to be a concerned and loving parent to her children. Marci had never been violent or psychotic before. It is extremely unusual for a person to have a first psychotic episode at such a late age, and when it happens it is usually due to a physical cause.

After spending close to two years in jail, Marci was found not guilty by reason of insanity and committed to a mental hospital for the criminally insane, where she can be confined for up to 100 years. She spent four years confined to Elgin Mental Health Center. Hospital personnel refused to consider even the possibility that the homicide was related to her psychiatric drugs, and showed no signs of ever releasing her. The environment there was hostile and abusive rather than therapeutic. She has been assaulted by other patients 15 times, sometimes at the provocation of staff. Two members of the staff even encouraged her to kill herself and provided her with the means to do so.

Marci refused treatment with psychiatric drugs there, which allowed her to recover from her mental confusion. She is lucid and not psychotic, despite her very difficult circumstances. She is not a danger to herself or others. Recently she was transferred to another facility, Chicago Read Mental Health Center, with no explanation for the reasons or plan for her release. The conditions there, though less violent and hostile, continue to be inhumane.

Marci's terminally ill father and her two surviving daughters need her and want her to be released. She has a job offer in Arizona, where she can be near her father.

We are currently seeking donations for legal representation and independent psychiatric evaluations in order to secure a discharge hearing to get Marci released. We are also seeking an attorney to represent Marci in a malpractice lawsuit against her prescribing physician.

Marci has pledged, upon her release, to speak publicly about her experience in order to educate the public about the dangers of psychiatric drugs so that no one else will have to

experience the hell that she has been through. Most victims of the homicidal/suicidal effects of psychiatric drugs do not live to tell the tale. Marci's story needs to be told.

Marci would also welcome letters of support. It's very difficult for her to keep her spirits up in her current circumstances. You can write to her at: Marci Webber, Chicago Read Mental Health Center, B South, 4200 North Oak Park Ave, Chicago, IL 60634. She can also be reached by phone at (773) 794-4049, but please note that this phone is for all patients on the unit and may be busy.

Cindy Perlin is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Board Certified Biofeedback practitioner who has been in private practice near Albany, NY for 25 years. She is past president of the Northeast Regional Biofeedback Society. She is the author of *The Truth About Chronic Pain Treatments: The Best and Worst Strategies for Becoming Pain Free*.

7. Bodies of missing Highlands Ranch mother and her two young boys found in minivan in Lone Tree — (The Denver Post)

By Jesse Paul | jpaul@denverpost.com, Kirk Mitchell | kmitchell@denverpost.com and Max Siegelbaum | msiegelbaum@denverpost.com

PUBLISHED: November 30, 2016 at 6:10 am | UPDATED: December 5, 2016 at 9:44 am

Jennifer Marie Laber, 38, and her two sons, Adam, 3, and Ethan, 5, were found dead in a minivan parked outside a closed Sports Authority store

LONE TREE — About 2 p.m. Tuesday, an elementary school surveillance camera captured Jennifer Marie Laber walking her two young sons out of the building before dismissal, the boys at her side with one wearing a backpack and the other in a blue coat and khakis.

Hours later, her husband reported them missing. By Wednesday morning, police had found the mother and her two little boys dead inside a silver Chrysler minivan parked in the secluded loading dock area of a shuttered Sports Authority store in Lone Tree.

"We certainly did not see this horrific ending that this case has come to today," said Chief Deputy Steve Johnson of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. "We do not have a lot of answers."

Investigators say Laber's husband is not considered a suspect, and they are not pursuing anyone in connection to the deaths of the 38-year-old mother and her sons, Adam, 3, and Ethan, 5. The discovery of the bodies ended a metro-wide search and left many — from neighbors to law enforcement — confounded at how such a tragedy could unfold.

Authorities declined to elaborate on why they do not believe there are any suspects. They say there is no threat to the community. "You'll just have to trust us," Johnson said. "We have a lot of work ahead."

The three were last spotted Tuesday afternoon at Bear Canyon Elementary as Laber removed her eldest son from kindergarten, earlier than the usual dismissal time, driving away in the 2011 Town & Country minivan where they all would be found.

Laber's husband, Ryan, who is the father of the children, was cooperating with investigators. The supervisor at a local engineering firm filed a missing-persons report at about 8 p.m. Tuesday.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office released a missing-persons bulletin about Laber and her children to law enforcement agencies in the Denver area Tuesday night. Early Wednesday morning, authorities sent pictures of the three to local media in hopes of finding them safe.

Johnson said that when the missing persons report came to authorities, it didn't appear that measures — such as issuing an Amber Alert — were needed.

"At the time we were notified," Johnson said, "there was no indication that it would come to this horrific ending. There were no red flags."

A passer-by called police at 7:47 a.m. after spotting Laber's minivan outside of the Sports Authority store near the intersection of County Line Road and Quebec, Lone Tree police spokesman Tim Beals said. It was not clear how long the minivan had been parked there.

"Officers responded to the scene and realized that the van that was here in the parking lot matched the description of the van that was reported associated with three missing people from the Douglas County Sheriff's Office," Beals said.

Dispatch recordings captured by Broadcastify.com show how officers first got the call.

"(Reporting party) stated that he saw or found a missing van with a woman and kids in it," a dispatcher called into the police radio Wednesday morning, sending an officer to the scene. "He has not approached the vehicle at this time."

A few minutes later, an officer arrived.

"I've got three wounded," an officer said on the radio. Laber and her sons were dead.

Beals said authorities have not classified what kind of investigation they are conducting. Autopsies are scheduled for Thursday morning.

"We have a very active, ongoing investigation that we have to look into," Johnson said. "If we could get a little bit of time and we could get a little bit of space to let this husband and father process what has taken place overnight and also allow us and the Lone Tree Police Department to piece this together."

Johnson said investigators are doing their best to get the father "the answers that he so desperately is going to need as he faces just this real hollow time in his life."

The minivan was found several hundred yards away from County Line Road and shielded by a wall.

By mid-morning, the scene was draped in yellow crime scene tape and filled with investigators.

Jennifer Laber was a social worker who was licensed in Minnesota between 2002 and 2014, according to the Minnesota Board of Social Work.

Douglas County property records show Laber and her husband bought a home for \$364,800 on Dec. 4, 2014, on the 9400 block of Hibiscus Drive, a quiet cul de sac in a tidy suburban development. Hours after the bodies were found, officers from the Douglas County Sheriff's Office sat in idling vehicles outside the two-story home as detectives and others came and went.

Hours after their deaths of Laber and her boys were announced, neighbors burst out crying. Parents whose children regularly played with Adam and Ethan struggled to think of ways to break the news to their kids. Others looked stunned and emotionally drained and had little to say other than offering condolences.

"None of us saw this coming, not even (her husband)," said Brandon Tartler, a neighbor and family friend who is serving as a de facto spokesman.

Jennifer Laber had struggled with depression, Tartler said. Authorities declined to discuss her mental health history Wednesday, saying it likely will be part of the investigation.

"Adam and Ethan were little bundles of energy," said Andrew Pena, the Laber family's next-door neighbor. "They were full of life and really smart. This is a real tragedy."

Pena said he was regularly in touch with Jennifer Laber to arrange play dates for their kids and didn't notice anything wrong when he saw her recently.

"She was a really sweet person," he said. "There were no indicators."

Phyllis Dubas lives across the street from the Labers. She said Jennifer was a stay-at-home mom who often took the boys for walks. The kids had a big play apparatus in their back yard.

"Her little boys were full of excitement," Dubas said. "She was with the children all the time. It's so very, very sad."

Kelly Ursetta, principal of Bear Canyon Elementary School, sent a letter to parents Wednesday offering tips about what to say to young children. A crisis counseling team was at the school to speak with students and teachers.

"I am heartbroken to inform you that a student at our school has died," Ursetta wrote to parents. "When no other words come to mind, a hug and saying, 'This is really hard for all of us,' may provide comfort."

Mother Who Killed Her Kids Before Committing Suicide Was On Antidepressants —
(Douglas County Coroner's Office)

Jennifer Laber had two antidepressants, desmethylvenlafaxine and bupropion, in her system when she took the lives of her sons, ages 3 and 5, and then ended her own life on November 29, according to the autopsy report released by the Douglas County Coroner's Office.

Desmethylvenlafaxine, marketed as Pristiq among other trade names, has known side effects that include depression and suicidal thoughts and actions. Pristiq was ranked #10 on the list of the top 10 prescription drugs most linked to violence compiled by

the Institute for Safe Medication Practices in 2010, after analyzing reports of drug side effects filed with the FDA.

The other antidepressant Laer was taking, bupropion, is marketed as Wellbutrin and Zyban among other trade names, and its known side effects include suicidal thoughts and attempts and thoughts of hurting or killing others.

8. Sheriff: Texas woman shot daughters to make husband 'suffer' — (Canadian Press)

By DAVID WARREN, Associated Press

Fort Bend County Sheriffs department investigate a shooting at Blanchard Grove and Remson Hollow in Katy, Tex., Friday, June 24, 2016.

DALLAS — A Texas woman who fatally shot her two daughters did not target her estranged husband because she "wanted him to suffer" the memory of their deaths, a sheriff said Wednesday.

Christy Sheats, 42, "had ample time" on Friday to shoot Jason Sheats after she called a family meeting at their home west of Houston, Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls said during a news conference. Jason Sheats, 45, thought his wife was going to discuss a possible divorce to the couple's daughters, Nehls said, but she instead shot Madison Sheats, 17, and Taylor Sheats, 22.

The children and Jason Sheats ran outside, but Christy Sheats followed them out and shot her eldest daughter again. A responding officer later shot and killed her when she refused orders to drop her gun. Jason Sheats was not injured.

"She accomplished what she set out to do, and that is to make him suffer," Nehls said, adding that Jason Sheats told investigators Tuesday about the sequence of events, details about the couple's crumbling marriage and Christy Sheats' bouts of depression.

The tension among family members had grown recently when Taylor Sheats had argued with her mother about her boyfriend, whom she intended to marry, Nehls said. Christy Sheats wanted to ground her daughter and prevent her from seeing her boyfriend, while her husband had argued it was inappropriate to ground someone of Taylor's age.

© sky news Christy Sheats, left, with daughter Taylor.

The sheriff's office released 911 calls this week that captured the panic in the neighbourhood on Friday. In the first call, a woman is heard crying, "Please! Forgive me! Please! Don't shoot!" After a scream, she cries, "Please! I'm sorry!" and "Please! Don't point that gun at her!" Another woman is heard saying, "I promise you, whatever you want," before the call is disconnected.

In a second call, a woman is heard saying, weakly, "She shot 'em." A neighbor during a third call describes the daughters lying in the street in front of their house. The neighbour describes Christy Sheats kneeling over her eldest daughter and shooting her.

Nehls said that Christy Sheats' life appeared to unravel in 2012 following the death of her grandfather, who she saw as a mentor. Her mother died a few months later. Her grandfather gave her the .38-calibre handgun used to kill her daughters. Sheats had applied for a license to carry the gun but was denied, the sheriff said, adding that authorities are investigating why she was denied.

She was admitted on three separate occasions to a private mental health facility and had been suicidal and suffered from depression. Sheats also had been unemployed since 2012 and her husband told investigators that at times she drank heavily.

The couple had been married for more than 20 years and was from Alabama.

© The Associated Press

Unraveling of a Family: How a 'Beautiful' Marriage Turned Tragic When Texas Mom Killed Daughters —(People.com)

By Adam Carlson, @acarlson91

07/01/2016 AT 01:40 PM EDT

Christy and Jason Sheats were longtime loves from Alabama, raising their two daughters in a suburb of Houston, Texas, on the day Christy decided to load a five-round, .38-caliber revolver and open fire on her family.

She killed Madison, 17, and Taylor, 22, on June 24, as Jason watched in horror, authorities said. Police then shot Christy dead in the street, near her daughters' bodies outside their Katy home, after she refused to drop her weapon.

How did the Sheats family get from there to here?

Authorities know Jason had announced his desire for a divorce the day of the shooting, after years of a crumbling marriage, Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls told PEOPLE.

Authorities know that, according to Jason, Christy had attempted suicide three times and had been treated at three mental health facilities in the last four years; and that she fought with Taylor and Jason the day of the shooting.

And authorities know that Christy began to "spiral" after her grandfather's death in 2012 [which is when she probably started taking antidepressants], months before her mother died, and Jason believes she killed their children as a way to make him "suffer," according to what Jason told investigators.

But there was no history of Christy being violently unstable, Nehls told PEOPLE. He said that, on that Friday, as the family gathered in their living room before Christy unexpectedly opened fire, Jason expected they would discuss the divorce.

She pulled a gun instead.

A 'Downward Spiral'

By late June, authorities say the Sheats marriage had soured and Jason said he wanted a divorce. The same day as the shooting, his birthday, he told Christy, "This would be the last birthday that you are going to ruin," Sheriff Nehls told PEOPLE.

Things took a turn in 2012, Jason told investigators, Nehls said.

"He [Jason] believes she had a very difficult time dealing with the death of her grandfather," Nehls said. Christy's mother died two months later.

In the four years since, Christy sought treatment at three mental health facilities, Jason told authorities. The family also started a pattern of service calls for authorities to their home, including three calls about Christy's suicide attempts, Nehls said.

Jason told authorities Christy was taking several medications for depression and anxiety, but Nehls told PEOPLE he did not have any information about her medication regimen or how it might or might not have affected her stability.

The day of the shooting, Christy had an argument with Taylor and wanted to ground her, to keep her from seeing her fiancé, Nehls said. Jason disagreed with that decision. He and Christy discussed divorce that day, too, Nehls said.

Within hours, both daughters and Christy were dead. Jason, a witness, pleaded with his wife not to shoot, according to 911 audio. "I promise you whatever you want," he can be heard saying on one call.

Jason, who was "obviously in a lot of shock out at the scene, spoke at length with authorities a few days later, Nehls said. He has declined, through authorities, to speak publicly.

On Wednesday, he resumed posting on Facebook, sharing a compilation of photos of his family: him and his daughters together, smiling.

Christy was not included.

With reporting by HARRIET SOKMENSUER and JEFF TRUESDELL

9. Detectives: Olympia mom slashed her children's throats because she wanted them to stop crying — (Q13 Fox)

by Hana Kim, Posted 5:42 PM, January 26, 2015

OLYMPIA — It's an unthinkable crime, a mother accused of slitting the throats of her three young children.

Police say Christina Booth, 29, early Sunday morning slashed her 2-year-old daughter's throat, then did the same to her 6-month-old twins.

Authorities say Booth called 911 after trying to kill her kids.

"My babies won't calm down, I've breastfed them, I've formula fed them, they are not calming down," said Booth.

Police say her husband then got on the phone.

The father is heard saying the kids were bleeding and needed immediate care.

During the 911 call, the couple never says that Booth hurt the kids but court documents state the mom admitted to slashing her kids' throats with a kitchen knife after reaching a breaking point.

Detectives say the mom wanted to stop her babies from crying. Documents state the mom had two glasses of wine before the incident.

On Monday, prosecutors told a judge that alcohol may have played a role in the crime and said they had severe concerns that Booth was a danger to herself and her kids.

The judge set her bail at \$3 million.

People who know the family are traumatized.

"You don't think someone of her nature, a really giving person, a loving mother, would snap," neighbor Kim Harris said.

Harris says it feels like a nightmare. Her thoughts are with the children -- all now in protective custody.

"There are no words to describe what they are going through," Harris said.

In separate interviews, detectives said the mother claimed her husband didn't help with the kids and she had to take them out of his sight when they cried.

Detectives say the father said his wife was on medication for postpartum depression.

During the end of the 911 call you can hear the mother breaking down. "I don't want to lose them, I don't want them to die, I don't want them to die," Booth said.

Thurston County officials say the father is a soldier at JBLM. They say the couple made inconsistent statements, but they don't anticipate charging the father with any crime at this point.

10. Pianist's wife accused of killing daughters struggled with mental illness (stuff.co.nz)

DEANNA BOYD

Last updated 15:54, March 23 2016

The wife of a renowned pianist accused of killing her two young daughters told police that she remembered cutting herself with a knife and taking pills at her Texas home because she "didn't want to live", but didn't recall harming her children.

"Did I do anything bad to my kids?" Sofya Tsygankova asked investigators when interviewed hours after the bodies of her children – 5-year-old Nika and 1-year-old Michaela Kholodenko – were found Thursday morning inside the family's Benbrook duplex.

On Tuesday, prosecutors filed two charges of capital murder against Tsygankova, 31, the estranged wife of Vadym Kholodenko, the gold medalist at the 2013 Cliburn piano competition. She was transferred to the Tarrant County Jail on Tuesday afternoon.

The Tarrant County medical examiner's office has temporarily ruled the children's deaths as "homicidal violence pending investigation", but evidence disclosed in arrest warrant affidavits released Tuesday indicates that the children may have been smothered with pillows.

The mother had a history with Mental Health and Mental Retardation and had visited an MHMR facility in Fort Worth the day before her daughters were discovered, according to the affidavit. An empty prescription bottle found inside the home indicated that Tsygankova had just been prescribed Quetiapine, an anti-psychotic drug used to treat such illnesses as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Catherine Carlton, a spokeswoman with MHMR Tarrant County, said "we are aware of this tragic situation" but privacy laws prevent them from acknowledging if a person has received their services.

Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson said Tsygankova was undergoing a thorough medical and psychological screening Tuesday afternoon. She will be housed initially in the jail's medical unit because of her injuries, he said.

According to the affidavits, Kholodenko had spoken with his oldest daughter and wife by phone on the night of March 16 and planned to pick up the girls the next morning and take them to school. He had been staying at a hotel outside Benbrook.

When he arrived at the home on Waterwood Trail on Thursday morning, however, no one answered the door. He told police that he opened the unlocked door and found his wife covered in blood with cuts to her wrists and his children in bed, not moving.

He called 911 and reported that his wife "was going crazy".

When police arrived at the duplex, they said they found her kneeling on the floor in the master bedroom, "rocking back and forth and making noises".

Police said she was wearing a mid-length nightgown that "was covered in blood" and a cut on her wrist and puncture wound on her chest were visible.

Inside the children's bedroom, police found Nika's body, dressed in a zip up-style onesie, on a small bed with pink bedding. An additional pillow on the bed – which appeared to have come from the master bedroom – showed a small spot of biological fluid on it, the affidavit states.

Michaela's body was found in the master bedroom. A pillow – also with a spot of biological fluid on it – was found partially resting on her head.

Both girls, the affidavit states, showed signs of rigor mortis.

Police found two knives, a blood-covered butcher knife near the edge of the patio and a cleaver-style knife on the inside rail of the bathtub inside the master bathroom.

Next to the knife in the bathtub were three additional prescription bottles bearing Tsygankova's name, the affidavit states. **A search warrant return identified the medications in the bottles as sertraline, an anti-depressant, and hydroxyzine pamoate, an antihistamine that is also used as a sedative to treat anxiety and tension.**

When asked about her injuries at the hospital, Tsygankova told police, "I think I committed suicide."

She told investigators she believed she cut herself with a knife and remembered taking a lot of pills.

"She stated at some point that she didn't want to live," the affidavit, written by Benbrook Detective R James, states.

Tsygankova told police that she had arrived home about 8:50 p.m. the night before. She said Michaela was already asleep in her crib and that a babysitter was putting pajamas on the older girl.

Tsygankova told police she put Nika to bed and that nobody else was at the residence that night.

Tsygankova said she remembered going outside later with a knife because she "didn't see any future for me and the kids".

When asked if she knew where her kids were, Tsygankova told police that she hoped that they were with their father.

"At one point in the interview, Tsygankova asked: 'Did I do anything bad to my kids?'" the affidavit states.

Tsygankova told police she recalled putting her children in the car at some point, but believed it was before she injured herself. She couldn't recall for police what took place in the vehicle.

According to the affidavit, police found bloodied linens inside the Ford Focus and blood in and around the car. A suitcase had been propped up under the car's rear bumper, apparently to hold in place a rag stuffed into the car's exhaust pipe.

"Tsygankova made several mentions of a bad dream that she had that night, but was unable to elaborate fully about the dream," the affidavit states. "Tsygankova remembered Kholodenko arriving at the residence and stating: 'What have you done?' Tsygankova assumed he was talking about all of the blood."

While police were on the scene, a woman came to the residence at the request of Tsygankova's sister, who lives in Amsterdam. The affidavit states that the sister had become concerned because her sister was not answering her phone.

"Tsygankova had been going through some difficult times because of the divorce," the affidavit states.

Kholodenko filed for divorce in November, stating that the couple, married in April 2010, had ceased living together as husband and wife on or about Aug. 15. Tsygankova counter-petitioned for divorce the same month.

David Kulesz of Arlington, Kholodenko's divorce attorney, said he has spoken to his client since his daughters' deaths.

"All I can really say about this tragedy is that my client is suffering great grief and requests that his privacy be respected at this time as he deals with this unbelievable loss," Kulesz said.

An attorney who represented a woman who killed her 10-month-old daughter in 2004 said the attorneys representing Tsygankova in the criminal case will "have their work cut out for them".

David K Haynes was the court-appointed attorney for Dena Schossler, who sliced off the arms of her daughter and was found not guilty of capital murder by reason of insanity. Schossler lives in a state hospital.

"It's just a very emotionally draining thing," said Haynes. "It's about little children ... It's horrific."

In the case of Tsygankova, Haynes said, her attorneys will have to "look into her previous life to see if there's been any indication of mental illness before now and if so, what's the nature of it. They have to try to find people who can explain all of that to a jury. And it's very difficult to do that, it's inexplicable why something like this could happen."

Court records indicate that Joetta Keene has been appointed Tsygankova's defense attorney. Keene declined to comment on the case.

11. Depressed mum stabbed her two daughters to death because she feared one had cancer — (The Mirror)

By Dave Rudge, 18:16, 9 Dec 2015

A depressed mum stabbed her two young children to death because she thought her eldest daughter had cancer, an inquest heard.

Marta Galikowska then turned the knife on herself and cut her own throat on October 12 last year.

A depressed mum stabbed her two young children to death because she thought her eldest daughter had cancer, an inquest heard.

Marta Galikowska, 27, then turned the knife on herself and cut her own throat on October 12 last year.

The bodies of Marta, her five-year-old daughter Maja and 20-month-old Olga were discovered by her husband Marcin Galikowski, 28, when he returned from work.

Today North Staffordshire Coroner's Court heard that the tragic mum had become convinced that Maja had cancer after she found a lump under her jaw.

Mrs Galikowska was prescribed antidepressants by a GP a week before her death after telling her husband that she wanted to kill herself and the children.

12. Mother who admitted killing her nine-month-old baby girl while suffering post natal depression is jailed for three years — (Daily Mail)

By Gemma Mullin, Published: 14:22 GMT, 12 August 2015

Erin Sutherland, 36, smothered daughter Chloe at their Edinburgh home

She received letter from ex-partner detailing plans for arranging access.

Court heard today Sutherland had intended to take her own life as well.

She was sentenced to three years imprisonment with a hospital direction.

A mother who admitted killing her nine-month-old baby girl while suffering from postnatal depression has been jailed for three years.

Erin Sutherland, 36, smothered her daughter Chloe at their home in Edinburgh in February after receiving a letter from her ex-partner detailing his plans for arranging access.

She was originally arrested for murder but later pleaded guilty to culpable homicide on the grounds of diminished responsibility at the High Court in Edinburgh in June.

Erin Sutherland, 36, (left) smothered her daughter Chloe (right), who was nearly 10-months-old, while suffering from post-natal depression

Defence counsel Gordon Jackson QC told the court today that the circumstances were 'extremely tragic' and Sutherland had intended to take her own life as well.

At an earlier hearing this year, the court was told that Sutherland had previously received hospital

But when her family doctor contacted a perinatal mental health team for her to see a community psychiatric nurse (CPN) following a consultation in December last year, support could not be offered.

Advocate depute Iain McSporran said: 'That team and the CPN were unable to offer support now that the baby was older than six months.'

Chloe's father, Craig Steedman, was at the trial today to see his ex-partner jailed for three years.

On the day of the killing, Sutherland phoned a post natal depression service at 1pm and an employee noted she was 'anxious and seemed scared by a letter she had received from her ex-partner regarding access to the children'.

She later phoned a friend to say she had 'put Chloe to sleep' and when the friend went round to her house the emergency services were already there.

They found the girl limp, pale and not breathing while **Sutherland appeared to be unconscious but was then sick and came round and revealed she had taken an overdose of medication.**

She was drifting in and out of consciousness and said: 'I smothered her. I suffocated her.'

Judge Lady Wise sentenced her to three years' imprisonment with a hospital direction, meaning that she will continue treatment for her mental health difficulties.

The judge told her: 'The circumstances of this case are tragic for all concerned and nothing I say today can alleviate the suffering of those who have lost Chloe.'

Chloe's father Craig Steedman and other relatives were present in court for the sentencing.

A statement was read on their behalf outside the court afterwards by Tracey Curran from Victim Support Scotland.

She said: 'Chloe's father Craig and his family are upset and saddened that the focus of reports on this case turned to how the system had failed Erin Sutherland and not the death of his precious little girl.

'Chloe was the victim in this case, a beautiful innocent child whose tragic senseless death is impossible to accept.

'Craig and his family deeply regret that Erin felt unable to accept the help and support which they were so desperate to provide.

'Sadly she seemed determined that Chloe would never be a part of either his or his family's lives.

'The system may have failed Erin, however it has also failed Craig as a father and most importantly it failed Chloe - his much-loved little girl who will be forever missed.'

POST NATAL DEPRESSION: A COMMON YET DEVASTATING CONDITION

Many new mothers will experience a brief period of feeling emotional, irritable and tearful after giving birth, which is commonly known as the 'baby blues'.

Figures have shown 85 per cent of mothers can feel this way and it usually starts around three to ten days after giving birth and only lasts for a day or a few days.

However, for a smaller percentage of mothers these feelings can develop into a deeper and longer-term depression, known as postnatal, or postpartum depression.

Around 10 to 15 percent of new mothers are affected, with symptoms usually developing within six weeks of giving birth, although it can be several months later.

Common symptoms of the depression include low mood, believing you are unable to cope, difficulty sleeping and feeling like you're not emotionally connected to your partner or baby.

Charity the Association for Post Natal Illness says it is contacted by 9,000 women every year who are suffering from depression.

Research has also shown that around one to four percent of men experience depression while their child is under one.

As long as postnatal depression is recognised and treated, it is a temporary condition you can recover from, according to the NHS.

Experts advise mothers to ask for help, however many people don't seek treatment because they might not recognise what's happening or may feel afraid to ask.

Treatment for postnatal depression can include self-help techniques, cognitive behavioural therapy and antidepressant medicine.

PND is thought to be the result of several factors including the physical and emotional stress of looking after a newborn baby, hormonal changes and social problems including anxiety over money, and women who have a previous history of depression are deemed to be more at risk.

Some mothers experiencing depression can have some obsessive thoughts, become very frightened about doing something wrong, being in some way inadequate and having their baby taken away, or fear they may harm their baby in some way.

Most women who experience it won't act on these thoughts, but it can still be frightening. If a mother is afraid that she may cause harm to the baby or herself then she should talk to her doctor as soon as possible.

Infanticide cases in the UK are very rare.

Figures compiled by the Office For National Statistics from between 2010/11 and 2012/13 show that in 6.4 per cent of the 1,1715 recorded homicide cases from that period the victim was aged under two (around 110 children).

Between 1995 and 1999 in England and Wales, 80 per cent of homicide victims under one year old were killed by a parent, according to research by the Home Office.

However, there are currently no statistics available for how many infant deaths were attributed to postnatal depression.

13. Major enquiry launched into death of Tommy Sheldon killed by mum Teresa in car inferno — (Hampshire Chronicle)

Lauren Howard, Reporter, 24 Jul 2015

Teresa Sheldon (pictured), was handed a hospital order, under the Mental Health Act, for killing her son, Tommy (insert)

A MAJOR enquiry has been launched into the death of a young boy who died in a car inferno started by his mentally ill mum, the Hampshire Chronicle can reveal.

Social workers last night confirmed there will a serious case review into whether anything could have been done to prevent the death of Tommy Sheldon – the five-year-old who died from severe burns after his mum Teresa torched the car he was in.

The tragedy came just a month after social services visited her at home, where the troubled mum told them she believed her ex-husband was trying to kill her.

As reported yesterday, the 38-year-old, then of Kathleen Road, Sholing, pleaded guilty to manslaughter and arson at Winchester Crown Court on Tuesday, following the tragic death of little Tommy at the Bristol burns unit on August 25.

She drove out to Merdon Castle Lane, in Hursley, where she doused her Ford Fiesta in petrol and set it alight.

The court was told she'd also spoken to her GP about her low mood beforehand.

Yet no health officials or social workers took action following her depressive mood swings on the basis there was "no reason for the intervention of medical services" and her "mental state wasn't picked up", as the judge, Mr Justice Dingemans concluded.

In the months leading to the incident her mental health had "significantly deteriorated" after it emerged she and her then husband, Ross, were getting divorced and she grew worried Mr Sheldon would gain custody, the court heard.

Social services and health officials have remained tight-lipped about why more wasn't done, considering Sheldon's mental state of health, who even went missing three days before the tragic event for several hours, sparking a manhunt by her family, after which she was found and described as behaving "bizarre".

When asked why more wasn't done to protect Tommy or Sheldon herself, social services refused to answer, simply saying: "There is nothing to suggest that any agency could have predicted that this would have happened."

Last night a Southampton City Council spokesman added: "The Southampton Local Safeguarding Children Board is conducting a Serious Case Review following the tragic death of this young child. "We cannot make any further comment at this time.

"This was a tragic and horrific incident, and our thoughts remain with Tommy's family and friends."

It was revealed during the hearing her bouts of depression had caused her to have "delusional beliefs" that her phone was being tapped.

She'd previously tried to commit suicide and even claimed her ex-husband was trying to kill her - allegations which resulted in social services paying her a visit on July 15, whereby she showed them her head board believing they were covered in slash marks.

Her allegations were investigated by social services as well as police but were found to have no substance.

Pathology reports showed traces of sertraline in Tommy's bloody – the same antidepressants Sheldon had been prescribed for a "recurrent mental disorder".

The judge agreed prison would not be in the best interest due to her “recurrent mental disorder”, which had “warped [her] perspectives on life”, and sentenced her under the Mental Health Act.

“I also note your previous good character,” he said. “On the other hand the harm that you have caused could not have been higher. I’m satisfied you were suffering from a mental disorder and that medical treatment is available because you’re still suffering from an episode and you need to receive treatment.

“It’s apparent you suffered a severe depressive episode with psychotic tendencies at the time of the killing,” he’d said. “You and Mr Sheldon had separated and, although it was initially amicable, you developed depressive symptoms following the serving of divorce papers.

“That affected your ability to know what you were doing.

“You went missing on the eighth of August, some three days before, and you were searched for. When you were found your behaviour was noticed to be bizarre.”

14. NY woman accused of killing autistic son with lethal cocktail of drugs stands Trial — (CNN/fox13now.com)

By Grace Wong, September 13, 2014

NEW YORK (CNN) — Gigi Jordan showed no emotion as a New York prosecutor described to a jury a “chilling and horrifying scenario” in which the businesswoman who made a fortune in pharmaceuticals allegedly concocted a lethal cocktail of painkillers and anti-inflammatories and forced her 8-year-old autistic son to swallow it. “Two fresh bruises on his nose, fresh bruises on his chin and chest suggest she got on top of him and, hopefully while he was asleep, filled a syringe with the poisonous concoction and pressed that plunger into his body,” said assistant district attorney Matt Bogdanos, demonstrating how she might have squeezed his nose and pressed open his mouth to deliver the poison.

“His fate was sealed,” Bogdanos said. “He didn’t die fast. One by one, his vital organs shut down. It didn’t take minutes. It took hours to die.” But on the first day of Jordan’s sensational second-degree murder trial — expected to last months — defense attorney Allan Brenner painted a starkly different portrait.

Brenner described Jordan as a desperate mother ultimately driven to kill Jude Mirra by her two former husbands: One who had allegedly threatened to kill her, a crime that would have left the boy with his biological father, who she believed had sexually abused Jude. In packed Manhattan criminal courtroom Wednesday, no one disputed the unthinkable manner in which little Jude spent his final hours on February 5, 2010.

Police found his cold body after they were dispatched to the luxury Peninsula Hotel in Manhattan. The call to police came after a relative of Jordan was unable to reach her. At an

autopsy, four of the painkillers and anti-inflammatories used to kill Jude were recovered undigested from his stomach, prosecutors said. Orange juice and vodka were used to wash down the drugs. While Jude lay dying, Bogdanos said, Jordan sent an email to a financial adviser instructing him to transfer the \$125,000 trust she set up for her son to her personal account. Brenner said Jordan, believing she was ultimately protecting her son, brought the drugs to the hotel room with the intention of killing them both, but she survived the suicide attempt. The prosecution sought to show the jury that the killing was premeditated and that Jordan expected to survive. Bogdanos said Jordan “went to the bank, she transferred \$8 million from savings to checking.

She checked in (at the hotel) without a reservation and paid cash.”

The exact time of the boy’s death could not be determined, but Jude’s body temperature was 80 degrees, suggesting that when police arrived, he had been dead for eight to 14 hours, Bogdanos said. **Police found a variety of drugs, which the prosecutor enumerated for the jury. “Xanax, 1,000 pills; Prozac, 200 pills; Ambien 400 pills; Celebrex, a pain reliever, 250 pills; Trexone, similar to morphine, 300 pills; and hydrocodone 9” were among the drugs found in the hotel room and part of the lethal mix that Jordan allegedly gave her son, according to Bogdanos.**

Still, Brenner told a spellbound jury that on that fateful day in 2010, Jordan acted out of love and desperation. She had been threatened by her first husband and former business partner, Brenner said. She had accused the man of raiding her bank accounts and defrauding her of millions in profits from their joint businesses.

She filed a lawsuit against him in 2012, seeking damages for breach of contract and fraud. “Gigi knew all the dirty deals,” Brenner said. “He knew that Jude was her soft spot.” Jordan “believed he was going to kill her, leaving a sexual predator to exercise his paternal rights,” Brenner told the jury. A lawyer representing her first husband did not return calls and emails seeking comment. But her first husband filed a lawsuit in August 2013, claiming Jordan defamed him in interviews she gave the media in an effort to advance her defense. Jordan believed that if she died, Jude’s biological father — a yoga instructor and undocumented immigrant who Jordan said she married to help him get a green card — would get custody, according to Brenner.

Jordan first learned that Jude had been sexually abused in December 2007, Brenner said. Jude was autistic and his vocabulary was limited, but in just a few words, he uttered: “Dad bad, Dad bad, over and over again,” according to Brenner. That was Jude’s way of letting his mother know that he had been victimized repeatedly sexually and physically, Brenner said. “He had been made to eat feces and subjected to the most degrading conduct imaginable,” he said. Jude’s biological father could not be reached for comment. A relative of the father did not return calls seeking comment. The boy’s father has denied the allegations and has never been charged, CNN affiliate WCBS reported. Brenner said Jordan told a therapist about the alleged abuse.

The allegations were reported to local authorities, but no action was taken. Jordan then decided to seek the help of a nationally renowned expert on child exploitation in Cheyenne,

Wyoming. After being interviewed by him for 30 minutes, Brenner said, Jordan was accused of being unfit and delusional, taken to a medical facility and separated from her son for several months before being reunited with the boy. “Now she sits here forever brokenhearted, stranded and separated from the true love of her life — her son,” Brenner said. Jordan faces 15 years to life in prison if convicted. She is expected to take the stand. CNN’s Morgan Winsor contributed to this report. The-CNN-Wire.

15. Witnesses detail Aquelin Talamantes’ mental health diagnoses leading up to drowning of daughter — (May 21, 2104

By Kim Minugh - kminugh@sacbee.com

A psychiatrist testified Wednesday that Aquelin Talamantes suffered from “acute paranoid psychosis” when she killed her 5-year-old daughter and put her in the trunk.

As 2013 wore on, Aquelin Talamantes’ mental health appeared to deteriorate significantly – according to court testimony Wednesday – from reporting anxiety to a physician’s assistant in January to allegedly suffering delusions and hallucinations at the time she killed her daughter nine months later.

After evaluating Talamantes, 29, in November and again in December, psychiatrist Captane Thomson testified in Yolo Superior Court that he believed the woman suffered from “acute paranoid psychosis” at the time she held her 5-year-old daughter Tatiana Garcia face-up under her bath water the morning of Sept. 26, killing her. Thomson said Talamantes admitted the act in her second meeting with him – saying “it was quick” – and said she regretted it deeply.

“It was acutely painful” for Talamantes to discuss, Thomson said. “She was terribly remorseful and wished that it could be reversed.”

Talamantes is accused of murder in connection with the little girl’s death in the Davis home they shared with Talamantes’ younger son, then-4-year-old Michael Garcia; Talamantes’ oldest sister, Elisa Torres; and Torres’ teenage son. She then put Tatiana’s body in a bag, stowed it in her car trunk and drove to another sister’s apartment in Sacramento, where authorities found the girl and tried to revive her.

Yolo County Deputy District Attorney Ryan Couzens argues that Talamantes knew what she was doing that day, and acted out of spite. He charges that she resented her children for ruining her career aspirations, abused drugs and is now trying to escape blame by pointing to abuse she suffered as a child.

Talamantes has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. Her attorney, Deputy Public Defender Sally Fredericksen, said her client’s sustained physical and sexual abuse as a child, the murder of her mother when she was 11 years old and a violent relationship with the father of her children have contributed to her unraveling.

So unraveled was she the day she drowned her daughter that she was in a “different mind state,” Thomson testified that Talamantes told him. “She said she thought the cops would ‘cut my daughter’s head off.’ ”

Though not included in his testimony Wednesday, he said last week that Talamantes was hearing voices in addition to suffering the delusions that the cops were after her daughter.

Talamantes interacted with Davis police officers the morning of Tatiana's death after a benign traffic stop ultimately led to a welfare check inside the home. Though they observed strange behavior by Talamantes, they determined that she did not meet the requirement for a "5150" involuntary mental health hold and left.

Torres, who cared for her six younger siblings after their mother died in 1995, has testified that she, too, witnessed her sister's downward spiral. Couzens, who rested his case Wednesday, has continued to downplay Talamantes' alleged mental health crisis in questioning Fredericksen's witnesses. Thomson's testimony continues Thursday.

In January 2013, Talamantes saw a physician's assistant at a community clinic in Oak Park for back pain, a sinus infection and anxiety. She left with prescriptions to treat all three. Later that month, a wellness counselor at another clinic diagnosed her with "major depressive disorder" after Talamantes reported feeling anxious, unmotivated and overwhelmed. Asked by Couzens, counselor Trina King testified that Talamantes never mentioned any kind of hallucinations or seizures.

King saw Talamantes again April 17 when she reported feeling anxious and paranoid. Concerned by her behavior, King brought in a supervisor, and they came up with a safety plan. That included coping skills and cutting down on marijuana use, as "typically marijuana is linked to paranoia," King said, again after questioning by Couzens.

Two days later, Talamantes went to an emergency room and, diagnosed with "depression and psychosis," ended up at the Sacramento County Mental Health Treatment Center on a "5150" hold. On April 22, employees there diagnosed her with borderline personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, according to testimony and documents presented in court.

On May 1, Talamantes called King to tell her about the 5150 hold and ask about getting her prescriptions filled. King gave her the number to a county clinic.

The day she was arrested in connection with her daughter's death, blood tests showed opiates – likely from pain pills – and Prozac in her system. She tested negative for marijuana, alcohol and all other drugs.

Also absent from her system was her Risperidone, Thomson testified, "the one medication that would have helped control her symptoms." She hadn't taken one, he said, since leaving Sacramento's mental health facility in April.

Since being taken into custody, Talamantes has resumed anti-psychotic medications. (The Sacramento Bee)

[Talamantes was convicted of murder and sentenced to 25 yrs to life]

16. Highland Park woman to get hearing to decide if she can retract guilty plea to killing son — (The Star-Ledger)

By Sue Epstein/The Star-Ledger

April 24, 2014 at 3:04 PM

HIGHLAND PARK — An appeals court has granted a Highland Park woman a hearing to determine if she should be permitted to retract her 2006 guilty plea to murder in the death of her 6-year-old son.

The three-judge panel published a 30-page decision today that grants Alice O'Donnell a post-conviction relief hearing to determine if she can show that her attorney's ineffectiveness led to her pleading guilty to killing her son, Phillip O'Donnell, instead of pursuing a trial with the defense that she was mentally ill when she smothered her son with a pillow on Feb. 21, 2005.

The judges overturned a lower court's decision to deny O'Donnell's motion for the hearing, arguing there is enough evidence that she suffered from mental illness at the time of the killing and that her attorney may not have given her the right advice when he told her to accept the plea to murder with a sentence of 30 years in prison without parole.

"Acquittal (at a trial) was far from certain," the judges said. "Yet, it is not self-evident that pleading guilty was a reasonable strategy, particularly since the agreement called for a plea to the indictment, and a sentence resulting in defendant's incarceration until age 74."

The appellate panel said O'Donnell's readiness to go to trial "is plausible, because she had a plausible defense that she could present through her expert's and perhaps her own testimony."

O'Donnell argued in her motion for a hearing that her attorney was ineffective by failing to "diligently" pursue a diminished (mental) capacity defense, according to the appellate decision.

She also said that her attorney, who was not identified in the decision, "unexpectedly" pressed her to plead guilty shortly before her case was set for trial, "without adequate explanation, stating it was necessary to avoid a life sentence," according to the judges.

Authorities said O'Donnell, distraught over mounting financial troubles, smothered her son in bed with a pillow after feeding him an overdose of cold medication and an antidepressant.

O'Donnell, then 42, wrote at least two suicide notes that she intended to kill herself as well, but succeeded in inflicting only superficial cuts to her forearms before police arrested her in her Highland Park apartment.

Her two sisters, alarmed by a phone call from officials at the Irving Primary School when Phillip O'Donnell, a first-grader, didn't show up for school, went to the Donaldson Park Apartments to find the child was dead and his mother laying next to him with the cuts on her arms.

The appellate decision said in the months before Phillip's death, O'Donnell experienced several difficulties, including the loss of her partner, Phyllis (Mari) who died in 2004. He was the bread winner of the family and paid the bills.

Sometime after her partner's death, O'Donnell was unable to find a job and pay the rent, and faced eviction.

O'Donnell told police after she fed him an antidepressant and Benadryl, an allergy medicine known to cause drowsiness, she put a pillow over his face and held it until the child stopped moving.

The decision said O'Donnell had a history of mental illness and psychiatric hospitalizations. A doctor hired by her defense attorney examined her, in preparing for her trial, said in his report that her "mental capacity was so impaired that she was unable to engage in purposeful conduct."

At one point before the case was to go to trial in March 2006, the judge sanctioned the attorney because he "failed to pay reasonable attention" to making sure prosecutors had the defense medical expert's report on time and, when questioned by the judge, "misled the (judge) about his progress," the decision said.

The judges said the attorney's behavior that led to his being fined is another consideration they used in deciding O'Donnell was entitled to a hearing on whether, because of his actions, she should be allowed to retract her guilty plea.

17. A mum guilty of infanticide after killing her baby girl and injuring the child's twin has avoided jail — (Melbourne Herald Sun)

Emily Portelli, March 28, 2014

A MUM who killed one of her twin baby girls and left the other severely disabled will not spend any time in jail.

The woman, 39, pleaded guilty to infanticide over the death of her eight-week-old daughter and recklessly causing serious injury to the baby's sister.

Infanticide applies for mothers suffering a mental disturbance caused by childbirth, and carries a maximum jail term of five years.

She can't be named, despite the father of the babies urging the court to lift a suppression order on her identity.

The father said he wanted the order lifted so he could talk openly about his lost daughter, who had "just disappeared".

He also wants to raise much-needed funds for the surviving twin, he told the court in a statement.

But the Supreme Court heard that identifying the woman would not be in the best interests of her surviving children.

Justice Bernard Bongiorno refused to lift the ban on publishing the names or pictures of the woman and the twins.

The twins' father, who was not present at two previous court hearings because he was at hospital appointments with his daughter, cried as the mother was sentenced to a community corrections order for one year.

Outside court, the twins' paternal uncle — wearing a doubled-over pink lapel ribbon — said the sentence was “manifestly inadequate”.

The father had asked the judge to “please hand down justice for my daughters,” in a moving victim impact statement read to the court.

He said he was now acting as both mother and father to the couple's older child and surviving daughter, who could not walk or talk as a result of permanent brain damage suffered at the hands of her mother.

The court heard the surviving children — the twin girl and a boy aged four — lived with their father, but their mother was still a legal guardian.

Justice Bongiorno said the father was awoken by noises made by his distressed, pale and limp baby girl, who stopped breathing, in the early hours of April 26, 2012.

Royal Children's Hospital staff found a massive skull fracture had caused bleeding around her brain and the baby girl died on the operating table.

Medical staff found both girls had multiple historic and recent fractures to their skulls, ribs and other bones and bruising over their bodies.

Their mother had told a maternal health nurse during multiple visits she could not explain the twins' visible bruises, claiming they may have been self-inflicted, caused by the other, or by their brother.

“They are like Houdinis — they get out of their wraps no matter how tight I wrap them,” she once told a nurse.

The babies, who had frequent crying bouts, trouble feeding and were not gaining weight, were diagnosed with colic.

After exonerating the baby's father early on, **police discovered his wife had been abusing the babies** from the time they arrived home in late February following a caesarean birth.

Defence lawyer Peter Morrissey SC said his client told police post-natal depression may have caused her to “flip”, as she did not remember when or how often she hurt them.

He said his client told police: “They were just crying all the time and she didn't feel worthy of being a mother because she couldn't help them.”

The court heard she could not detail how she injured the babies, but once stopped herself when she realised she was shaking one girl, illustrating how she would rock them to the police.

She told police: “Maybe I shook them too hard like that.”

Justice Bongiorno said the woman's mental disorder, connected with the recent childbirth, meant she could not be guilty of the charges of murder or attempted murder.

“It was clear they were inflicted by a loving mother suffering from significant emotional and psychological compromise,” the judge said.

The Supreme Court heard during a plea hearing last week that the woman was prone to depression and had an appointment to see a psychiatrist five days after her daughter died from injuries inflicted by her.

Justice Bongiorno agreed that there was nothing the court could impose that would be worse than the mother’s current suffering.

Mr Morrissey said the mother was a “broken” woman who suffered from an “acute level of self-hate, loathing, sadness and grief” and visited her daughter’s grave daily.

He submitted she should be pitied, not jailed.

“As for punishment, our submission is there is nothing more to be done — she has an ongoing sentence in that respect,” he said.

“She very much repents what she did and will live with that very much for the rest of her life.”

Mr Morrissey said no Victorian women had been jailed for infanticide.

The woman, who has been on bail since being charged in August 2012, remained on antidepressant medication and was a risk of suicide, the court heard.

Mr Morrissey said she was motivated by the faint possibility of being able to have contact with her surviving children in the future.

18. Mother convicted of killing her baby daughter spared jail — (The Guardian)

Press Association

Tuesday 12 November 2013 12.41 GMT

Natasha Sultan admits killing six-week-old Amelia-Lilly in 'maelstrom of fatigue and mental disorder' from postnatal depression.

A mother who admitted killing her baby daughter while she was "in a maelstrom of fatigue and mental disorder" caused by postnatal depression has been spared jail.

Natasha Sultan, 21, sobbed as she was sentenced on Tuesday for infanticide over the death of six-week-old Amelia-Lilly in October last year.

Judge Jeremy Richardson QC told her: "You are an utterly broken woman who will have to live with this for the remainder of your life, whether it's short or long."

The judge gave her a three-year supervision order and added: "If you should ever have any other children, the social services department will plainly be involved and it may be that you are not permitted to bring up any future child given what has happened."

Hull crown court heard how Amelia-Lilly was taken to hospital from her home in Welton Grove, Hull, on 8 October with a head injury and later died.

Sultan eventually admitted inflicting the injury on her daughter. Richardson said he accepted the balance of her mind had been disturbed at the time.

The defendant was due to go on trial for murder on Monday but the prosecution accepted her guilty plea to a charge of infanticide.

The judge told Sultan: "For the remainder of your life you will have to live with the fact you killed your six-week-old daughter. That burden will never be lifted."

He told the court that Amelia-Lilly was a much wanted child but he said it was "plain" that following the birth, Sultan suffered from postnatal depression and could not sleep.

A psychiatrist said this was a "moderate form of depression".

The court heard how Sultan went to her GP and was prescribed antidepressants, but she did not take the full dose.

"It seems there was some reluctance to do so based upon a feeling of shame that you were unable to cope as a mother," Richardson said.

"It is self-evident you were very tired and suffering from the effects of untreated postnatal depression when the events of the night of October 7, 2012 took place.

"You were exhausted by the demands of constant night-time care for your baby, who at that stage was only six weeks old."

The judge said Sultan killed Amelia-Lilly "by deliberately impacting her head upon a hard surface".

He said: "During the first feeding session there was a sudden explosion of violence whilst your mind was disturbed."

Judge Richardson told her: "There will be many parents of infants who appreciate the situation in which you found yourself. The sudden explosion of violence was due to your unbalanced mind derived from postnatal depression.

"What is harder to understand, however, is your conduct afterwards. You went to bed having visited serious violence upon your daughter. You neglected her obvious and urgent need for medical attention. You simply went to bed."

The judge outlined how Sultan then lied to doctors about what happened and repeatedly lied to investigating police.

"You even went through the charade of endeavouring to show how the accident, as you then called it, might have happened," he said.

The judge went on: "I also will not lose sight of the fact of your disturbance of mind as revealed in the psychiatric report. It is clear you were in a maelstrom of fatigue and mental disorder when you acted as you did throughout the whole episode."

He said the court had heard how Sultan was "a loving mother who deeply wanted a child and adored your daughter".

The maximum sentence for infanticide is life imprisonment.

Richardson said there were no sentencing guidelines to help him, or any relevant previous cases on which he could base his sentence.

He said he believed the case had "passed the custody threshold" but he said: "However, you are an entirely broken woman and your disturbance of mind at the time, coupled with your guilty plea, enables me to take a different course.

"A short prison sentence would be inappropriate. A long prison sentence would be unjust."

The judge barred Sultan from engaging with children in regulated activities and disqualified her from working with children.

Sultan was still crying as she left court comforted by family members.

19. Pamela Brooks not under influence of illicit drugs or alcohol when she killed daughter and herself — (Palm Beach Post)

Alexandra Seltzer, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2013

Pamela Brooks was not under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol and had only a prescribed dosage of the anti-depressant Prozac in her system when she stabbed her 10-year-old daughter more than 20 times and herself more than 150 times, toxicology results show.

Her daughter, Alexandra, also was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The September deaths came after a long divorce and custody battle between Pamela and Bradley Brooks over their little girl. Pamela Brooks was depressed and struggled with alcohol abuse. In late May a judge ordered if Pamela Brooks was found drinking again, Bradley Brooks would receive full custody of their daughter.

Pamela and Alexandra Brooks — who attended The King's Academy — were found dead Sept. 12 in their Gregory Place home after Bradley Brooks couldn't reach them.

The toxicology results showed Brooks was taking 40 mg of Fluoxetine, or Prozac, a day. The autopsy revealed Brooks had 190 mg/mL in her system, in line with what would be in her system about four to eight hours after taking the dosage.

Among the stab wounds found all over Alexandra's body is a 1-inch wound to the right side of her chest that traveled through two ribs, the right lung and a right ventricle of her heart.

Pamela Brooks had many hesitation stab wounds on her body, including 29 on the right side of her abdomen that were up to 2 millimeters deep. Brooks also stabbed herself on her face, the top of her head, her neck, sternum and her right hand.

Brooks' decision to use a kitchen knife shows the murder-suicide was likely impulsive and could have been a result of a psychotic panic, said Dr. Steve O'Brien, of the Florida School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University in Tampa.

“She was out of touch with reality,” O’Brien said. “It’s likely that she was out of control, and she may have been responding to some form of a hallucination, an auditory hallucination. In some psychotic process, voices and a delusional belief system, where if she didn’t do this, something bad would happen, which is kind of ironic because this was obviously horrific.”

The Brooks’ murder-suicide is a case of maternal filicide, when a mother kills her daughter or son, O’Brien said.

Maternal filicide mothers are often found to have suffered from depression or psychosis and can be driven to kill their child for a range of reasons:

- The mother may believe killing her daughter or son is best for the child.
- The mother may not want the child.
- In rare cases, the mother may kill the child to punish the child’s father, according to a 2007 article in World Psychiatry.

While the number of times Brooks stabbed herself and her daughter are outrageous, cases of maternal filicide aren’t unusual.

20. Edmonton Mother Who Drowned Son, 7, Told Family She Fantasized About Killing Her Child Before Alleged Murder — (Canadian Press)

By Chris Purdy

13/09/13 Last Updated: 13/09/13 12:44 AM ET

Nerlin Sarmiento told her family she had dark thoughts about killing her two children.

The 32-year-old had been in and out of hospital and was on medication for depression and possible bipolar disorder. So, in late 2012, her mother started spending nights at the family’s Edmonton apartment to help look after the kids. Sarmiento’s husband thought they would be safe.

But on Feb. 12, after her husband and mother left for work, Sarmiento sent her 10-year-old daughter off to school and started filling the bathtub with water.

Seven-year-old Omar Jajoy had been sitting at the kitchen table eating breakfast and finishing his homework.

I have been sick, my mind plays with me.

Court documents show his mother shoved him into the bathroom, pushed him into the tub, got into the water herself and held his small head down while he thrashed in the water.

After he stopped moving, she called 911.

A court hearing began Thursday to determine if Sarmiento should be held not criminally responsible for the crime.

The woman admits in court documents that she killed her son but she has pleaded not guilty to a charge of first-degree murder. Her defence lawyer, Peter Royal, plans to call medical evidence showing she was suffering from a mental illness at the time.

In a videotaped interview with police after the drowning, Sarmiento said she knew that killing her son was wrong and she must pay for what she had done.

She said she had wanted to drown both her children that day. But her daughter was too big.

Sarmiento described how the family moved to Canada from Colombia in 2007. She found it lonely and difficult to learn English. For two years before the drowning, she saw a doctor and was taking monthly injections so she could feel better. Her medication changed several times.

"I have been sick, my mind plays with me," she told police. "Sometimes I imagine things."

Sarmiento spoke about how she was worried about the family's finances and the kids always needed new clothes, shoes and socks. The morning of the killing, she heard her daughter say they were "hobos."

Is it worse to be dead or is it worse to be poor?

"Is it worse to be dead or is it worse to be poor?" asked a police officer.

"I think it's worse to be alive," Sarmiento replied.

She said she tried to hang herself the day before she drowned her son. She had planned to try again after he died in the tub but said she mistakenly dialled 911 too soon.

Sarmiento's husband, Florentino Jajoy, wasn't in court for the hearing. But he earlier told reporters his wife wasn't to blame for his son's death. The medical care she had been getting was obviously "wrong," he said, and the health system failed her.

It's not clear what Sarmiento disclosed to her doctor.

Mommy, please get off me!

She told police she had thoughts of stabbing the children and smothering them with a pillow. She once fantasized about throwing them over a third-floor railing at a downtown shopping centre.

Court documents show that after she told her mother, Maria Cristano, about the deadly thoughts bouncing around her head, the older woman questioned her. Sarmiento told her that her doctor knew about it.

When she told her husband, he threatened to call police and a crisis team. But, after she got some sleep, she reassured him that everything was OK and she wouldn't harm the children.

But at some point in 2012, Sarmiento took her daughter into a bedroom and locked the door. She put the girl on a bed and started choking her around the neck.

"She said it was a game," the girl told police in another videotaped interview.

"I'm like, 'That's not a game Mommy.' And I started crying ... I'm like, 'Mommy, please get off me!' And she got off me and she said, 'I'm sorry.'"

The girl said her mother asked her not to tell anyone or she would have to go back to the hospital.

After the police detective left the interview room, the video shows the girl quietly talking to her dead brother.

“Omar, if you’re up in the sky or here on Earth, can you take care of yourself,” she said.

“Please pray, brush your teeth and (do) everything that you need. I love you very much.”

Alberta woman accused of killing son ordered to have psychiatric assessment —The Canadian Press)

Feb 15, 2013

EDMONTON – A judge has ordered a psychiatric assessment for an Edmonton mother accused of killing her seven-year-old son.

Nerlin Sarmiento’s lawyer, Peter Royal, told court Friday that his client has “very significant mental health issues.”

The 32-year-old woman will be held at Alberta Hospital for 30 days while experts determine whether she’s fit to stand trial and whether she can be held accountable for the alleged crime.

Police were called Tuesday to an apartment on Edmonton’s south side where Sarmiento’s son, Omar Jajoy, was found dead.

Results of an autopsy have not been released, although police at one point said the boy appeared to have drowned.

Investigators have also said they believe they have enough evidence to show the death was premeditated.

Sarmiento has been charged with first-degree murder.

The woman, at times crying, stood stiffly in the prisoner’s box as several family members sat in the courtroom with their arms around each other.

Royal said his client, who will be on suicide watch while in custody, has been hospitalized twice in the last two years for significant periods of time.

Her husband, Florentino Jajoy, said in a statement Thursday that his wife was under medical treatment and taking drugs for severe depression. But the care she was getting was obviously “wrong” and the health system clearly failed her,” he said.

“As a family, our opinion is that she is innocent because she was not responsible for her actions,” Jajoy said in the statement.

“She is a loving mother, wife and daughter who put her children’s needs before her own.”

The couple also has a 10-year-old daughter.

The judge granted a Crown request for an order banning Sarmiento from contacting her husband, daughter and another relative – who are considered key witnesses in the case.

Sarmiento is to be back in court March 15.