



H18 Homicidal Violence Against Children in Mississippi: Four Case Reports

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the variation observed in homicidal cases as it pertains to violent crimes against children in the state of Mississippi. According to recent statistical data, Mississippi exhibits the highest infant mortality rate in the United States; however, these mortality rates do not include child deaths resulting from repeated abuse, neglect, or random criminal acts.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by discussing four cases of homicide in which the violence or maltreatment was perpetrated against children aged 5 to 13 years by parents or other relatives, non-parents (e.g., acquaintances or partners of relatives), or strangers.

Case 1: The partially clothed body of a 5-year-old female was found in an unoccupied mobile home by search teams the day after her abduction from her apartment complex. The postmortem examination revealed evidence of blunt trauma to the face and extremities and penetrating peri-genital injuries indicative of sexual battery. Dependent lividity and regionalized petechiae were consistent with asphyxia due to ligature strangulation (hanging). A male resident/visitor at the complex was eventually arrested and charged with capital murder. He was convicted and sentenced to death.

Case 2: A 7-year-old Black male and his mother were reported missing in late 2013. Their overturned and burning car was discovered, and their bodies and that of the child's stepfather were found inside an abandoned house. The juvenile's cause of death was identified as a single shotgun wound of the right forearm into the back with injury to the upper extremity and thoracic region. Authorities believe that the stepfather was killed first, and the child and his mother were subsequently taken to the house and shot. The perpetrator was convicted on two counts of capital murder.

Case 3: The decedent was an 11-year-old male who was found unresponsive in the bathroom of his father's and stepmother's home, and subsequently declared dead at the scene. Pertinent findings at autopsy were emaciation with blunt force injuries of the head, neck, torso, and extremities of sufficient severity to cause death. Body weight and organ weights were abnormally low, and subcutaneous adipose tissue and mesenteric fat were scant. The stepmother received a life sentence for second-degree murder; the boy's father was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

Case 4: This 13-year-old female and her mother were victims in a domestic murder-suicide carried out by the mother's live-in boyfriend. All three bodies were found at the residence by authorities after efforts to contact them had failed. The child died as a result of a close-range perforating gunshot wounds to the hands and forehead.

Homicide, Children, Child Abuse