

Parents Say Adopted Son Harmed Himself

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YORK, Pennsylvania — U.S. parents defending themselves against homicide charges in the death of a 7-year-old boy they adopted from Russia said in court filings this week that they sought medical help because the boy repeatedly hurt himself.

Michael Craver, 46, and Nanette Craver, 54, of Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, argued that their son, Nathaniel, had been diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder, which includes a tendency to injure one's self.

A developmental neuropsychologist told The Patriot-News of Harrisburg newspaper that it was possible that Nathaniel unwittingly injured himself to the point of death, but cautioned against speculation without a full evaluation of his development.

"I've had a kid who chewed his hand off," said Dr. Ron Federici. "I had a kid who poked an eye out. Kids who cut themselves with no pain."

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against the couple, saying Nathaniel had been

tortured.

Authorities said Michael Craver showed up at a Camp Hill hospital in August 2009, telling doctors he found the child in bed, unresponsive. After he died a few days later, police said he suffered a traumatic brain injury, had about 80 external injuries and had been malnourished.

The York Dispatch reported Wednesday that the Cravers argued they provided significant medical care to their children, including at facilities in Dillsburg, Lancaster and Philadelphia. Nathaniel also received psychiatric care, the defense motion said.

Nathaniel's twin sister is living with a family member, The York Dispatch reported. The paper said a judge gave Nanette Craver permission to write and receive letters from the girl, a right her husband was granted last month. County child welfare authorities can review the letters beforehand.

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