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Tampa Bay Times

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ARCHIVE

Death of teen prompts inquiry

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A 15-year-old who tried to hang himself at a youth shelter dies after four months in a coma.

A homicide investigation was launched Tuesday into the death of a teen who went into a coma four months ago when youth workers found him hanging in an apparent suicide attempt but left him for police to cut down.

"We are conducting a joint investigation with our homicide unit," said Dennis Seagel, a spokesman for the child abuse unit of the Broward State Attorney's Office. "We have to determine whether the death was a result of the hanging or if there was some other cause. We need to wait for the medical examiner to determine that."

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Anthony Dumas, 15, died Saturday at Broward General Hospital. He had been in a coma since trying to hang himself by a belt at a youth shelter four months ago, but his family said he had shown recent signs of recovery.

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"He wasn't supposed ner. "He was supposed to come home.

Nurses found Dumas about 10:15 p.m. Saturday face down in his pillow. Doctors tried for 30 minutes to revive the boy, Broward Medical Examiner Joshua Perper

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said. He said determining an official cause of death will take a few weeks.



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Dumas' parents said he had been able to sit up and stand with little assistance, and could track people's movements with his eyes.

On June 12, police said, a Lippman Family Shelter employee snapped Polaroid photos of Dumas as he was hanging unconscious from a belt tied to his bunk bed.

The boy's brain was deprived of oxygen for several minutes from the time he was found by his roommate and three youth care specialists until police cut him down after they arrived.

Dumas' parents are suing Lutheran Ministries of Florida Inc., the Tampa-based agency that runs the 28-bed shelter. The suit also names youth care specialists Sandra Trotter, who took four to six photos of Dumas, Lorie Lesane and Valerie Harris. All have been suspended without pay by Lutheran Ministries.

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The Department of Juvenile Justice's Inspector General's Office is also conducting an investigation.

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