

PRESS RELEASE:

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Office of Leavenworth County Attorney Todd Thompson

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Leavenworth woman sentenced in fentanyl-related death of 3-year-old child

LEAVENWORTH, Kan. — A 40-year-old Leavenworth woman has been sentenced to prison in connection with the death of a 3-year-old child who died of acute fentanyl toxicity.

Tara Ann Huerta pleaded guilty Feb. 18 in Leavenworth County District Court to one count of involuntary manslaughter and one count of aggravated endangering a child.

During a sentencing hearing held on March 27, 2026, Huerta was sentenced to 97 months in the Kansas Department of Corrections.

According to court documents, the charges stem from a March 26, 2025, incident involving the death of a 3-year-old child who was in the care of Huerta and 35-year-old Kenneth Hedgecock.

According to those court documents, a Leavenworth Police Department officer was dispatched at approximately 4:32 a.m. to an apartment near Limit Street and Martin Luther King Drive for a first-aid assist. Upon arrival, officers observed a 3-year-old child lying on the living room floor while emergency responders performed chest compressions. The child was transported to an area hospital in Leavenworth by paramedics. While at the hospital, the victim was pronounced dead.

During the investigation, officers contacted Huerta and Hedgecock. Huerta told police that Briana Davis had been at the apartment on March 25 and left the victim in their care. The child had been sleeping on the couch.

Huerta and Hedgecock admitted to using drugs while the child was inside the apartment. They told investigators that around midnight, they noticed the child was breathing differently and appeared to be having a bad dream. Hedgecock yelled the child's name, and the child opened his eyes and looked at him before going back to sleep.

Hedgecock later told investigators that at approximately 4:20 a.m., he woke to check on the child and realized something was wrong. He woke Huerta, and the two observed that the child was no longer breathing. They then called 911.

Investigators collected multiple items of evidence from the apartment, which were submitted to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation crime laboratory for testing. Swabs taken from the couch where the child had been sleeping tested positive for methamphetamine and fentanyl. A small baggie with residue found under the couch tested positive for methamphetamine, cocaine and fentanyl. A corner tie recovered from a couch cup holder tested positive for methamphetamine.

An autopsy determined the victim's cause of death was acute fentanyl toxicity.

Earlier this year, on Jan. 21, 2026, Briana Rene Michelle Davis, 30, the victim's mother, pleaded no contest and was found guilty of abandonment of a child, aggravated battery, and endangering a child. Court records showed Davis left the child in the care of Huerta and Hedgecock, knowing the child could be harmed.

Kenneth C. Hedgecock pleaded no contest Monday, March 2, 2026, to one count of involuntary manslaughter and one count of aggravated endangering a child. He was found guilty on both counts.

Leavenworth County Attorney Todd Thompson said, "This was a preventable tragedy, and three people have now been convicted in connection with the loss of a young child's life. Fentanyl remains an incredibly dangerous substance— even a small amount can be fatal, especially for a child. It poses a danger not only to those who use it, but to everyone around them. Those entrusted with a child's care have the utmost responsibility to protect them, and when adults choose to keep deadly substances in a home where a child is present, the consequences can be devastating."