

Defendants Convicted for Murder, Abuse of 2-Year-Old Child



Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

Semper Justitia

DATE: October 19, 2022

CASE: Frederic McDonald, Samantha Zechlin (Case #17FE022432)

PROSECUTOR: Principal Criminal Attorney Matt Chisholm, Homicide Unit

Frederic McDonald and Samantha Zechlin were each charged with crimes related to the death of Zechlin's 2-year-old daughter. On August 25, 2022, Frederic McDonald pled to second-degree murder. On October 18, 2022, Samantha Zechlin was convicted by a jury of child abuse causing death plus a death enhancement.

On November 20, 2017, McDonald called 911 to report an unresponsive child. Sacramento Metro Fire immediately responded to an apartment where McDonald lived with his girlfriend, Samantha Zechlin, and her 2-year-old daughter. Both defendants told first responders that the child was found unresponsive in her crib. The child was transported to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased. Several bruises were apparent on both sides of the victim's face. A subsequent autopsy revealed internal injuries to the victim's neck muscles, consistent with manual strangulation, and blunt force injuries to multiple areas of her scalp. Sacramento sheriff's detectives obtained video footage from a nanny camera showing McDonald choking and assaulting the 2-year-old victim the day prior to him calling 911. In interviews, Zechlin acknowledged seeing photos of her daughter with heavy bruising on her face prior to her daughter's murder, yet she made no attempt to stop the abuse.

McDonald will receive a sentence of 17-years to life in prison at his sentencing hearing on October 21, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. in Department 62. Zechlin faces a maximum sentence of 8 years in prison at her sentencing hearing on November 16, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. in Department 11 before the Honorable James McFetridge.

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