



ELLIS COUNTY & DISTRICT ATTORNEY

M. ANN MONTGOMERY

ELLIS COUNTY COURTS BUILDING • 109 S. JACKSON • WAXAHACHIE, TX 75165 • (972) 825-5035 • FAX (972) 825-5047

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Contact: Cynthia Walker, 972-825-5213 (cynthia.walker@co.ellis.tx.us)

Waxahachie Man Gets Life in Prison for Beating His Infant Daughter to Death

Ellis County and District Attorney Ann Montgomery announced that Jose Sierra, 38, of Waxahachie, Texas, was sentenced to Life in prison for Injury to Child.

On December 28, 2021, Sierra pulled up to the Ellis County Jail in downtown Waxahachie and flagged down two maintenance workers, stating that his baby was unresponsive. A worker called 911 and an ambulance arrived on the scene in less than a minute. A paramedic found the child unresponsive, limp, and cold to the touch. Despite life-saving efforts in the ambulance, paramedics were never able to get a cardiac rhythm. The child, seven-month-old Valeria Sierra, was pronounced dead at Baylor Scott and White Medical Center in Waxahachie. Emergency room personnel immediately grew suspicious upon examination of the infant as she had several bruises on her body and multiple broken bones in various stages of healing.

An autopsy performed at the Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences in Dallas revealed that Valeria had two healing broken clavicles, a healing fracture to the left femur, healing fractures to the left proximal tibia, and a refracture to a healing break of the left distal fibula. The child also had numerous bruises and hemorrhages to her head, face, neck, chin, shoulder, torso, right hand, and left leg. According to forensic pathologist Dr. Chester Gwin, Valeria's body "could no longer fight and heal from these injuries."

In statements to the police, Sierra attempted to cast blame on the child's mother, the child's pediatrician, Valeria's nieces, and nephews, and even on Valeria herself. He also gave explanations for the injuries, but his explanations did not match the medical evidence of the injuries or the level of force that caused Valeria's injuries. The police investigation showed that the injuries to Valeria began shortly after Valeria's mother went back to work—leaving Sierra, Valeria's father, as the sole caregiver of the child when the mother was working.

On September 28, 2023, the jury swiftly delivered a guilty verdict and sentenced Sierra to life in prison. Judge Cindy Ermatinger of the 443rd District Court, who presided over the trial, pronounced the sentence. Injury to a Child as charged in the indictment carries a sentencing range of 5 to 99 years or life in prison. The defendant was probation eligible.

“The injuries this baby endured during her short life were despicable,” stated Montgomery. “The person who should have protected Valeria was, in fact, the perpetrator. Once again, an Ellis County jury showed that if you commit a crime and intentionally or knowingly hurt a child, there will be severe consequences. I am proud of the work by my office and the Waxahachie Police Department in bringing justice for Valeria.”

Assistant County and District Attorneys James Zaleta and Sherry Roeder prosecuted the case, assisted by County and District Attorney Investigator Todd Woodruff. The case was investigated by Officer Elizabeth Glidewell, Detective Jill Turner, and retired Officer Michael McCorkle of the Waxahachie Police Department. The Ellis County and District Attorney’s Office would like to thank Dr. Suzanne Dakil, M.D., of the REACH Clinic at Children’s Health in Dallas for her assistance in the case and her expert testimony, as well as Emergency Room personnel at Baylor Scott and White Medical Center, Waxahachie.