

Mother sues psychologist following toddler's death, says report ignored father's psychopathy

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WASHINGTON — The mother of a 15-month-old boy who died on a court-ordered visit to his father filed a wrongful-death lawsuit Tuesday against the psychologist who sanctioned the visitation.

Hera McLeod of Gaithersburg, Md., filed the \$20 million suit in Fairfax County, Va., against Ashburn Psychological Services and psychologist Margaret Wong, alleging professional negligence resulting in the wrongful death of her son, Prince McLeod Rams.

McLeod said at a news conference announcing the suit that Wong's report was instrumental in a judge's decision to grant unsupervised visitation of Prince to his father, Joaquin Rams.

Prince died in October, on the fourth unsupervised visit, and last month, Joaquin Rams was charged with murder by prosecutors in Prince William County, Va. Authorities say he drowned the boy and had taken out life insurance policies on his son totaling more than \$500,000.

Authorities say that Prince's drowning has prompted a closer look at two other deaths of people close to Rams: the still-unsolved shooting of his ex-girlfriend Shawn K. Mason in 2003 and the 2008 death of Joaquin Rams' mother, which was classified a suicide.

McLeod objected to turning her son over for unsupervised visitation on concerns that he would be in danger. She says the psychologist ignored clear warning signs that the father was dangerous, including testimony at the custody hearings that Manassas police considered Rams a suspect in Mason's death.

McLeod, a former contestant on the CBS reality show "The Amazing Race," has been vocal in efforts to hold accountable those who she believes failed to protect her son when they had the opportunity, including the judge who granted the visitation. She writes a blog, Cappuccino Queen, that documents her case and her son's short life.

Rams, before he was arrested, responded with a blog of his own, King Latte, in which he leveled

his own accusations against McLeod.

McLeod's lawsuit also alleges that Wong ignored a previous psychological examination of Rams that included allegations that he was physically abusive, had pulled a gun on a former girlfriend and had engaged in sexually aberrant behavior.

"I believe this doctor's negligence led to my son's murder," McLeod said, saying it was hard more her to imagine a person more seriously "disordered" than her former fiance.

McLeod acknowledged Rams had a gift for deceiving people, including herself, at least for the first few months of their relationship. But she said that does not excuse Wong from missing obvious signs that Prince would be in danger if Rams were given unsupervised visits.

"The difference is, I'm not a psychologist," McLeod said.

The psychology practice declined comment Tuesday.

The judge in Montgomery County, Md., who heard the custody dispute ordered Rams to get a mental evaluation, but allowed Rams to pick the psychologist. Rams was also the one who paid for the evaluation.

McLeod's attorney, Patrick Regan, said Wong had a duty to prepare a report that would serve the best interests of the child, rather than merely benefiting the person who paid for the evaluation.

Regan said there is a direct link between the faulty psychological report and the judge's decision to grant unsupervised visitation, which resulted in Prince's death.

"If it had been a supervised visitation, it never would have happened," Regan said.

Rams is now in custody pending a formal indictment for Prince's killing.

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