



THE BROWN SCHOOLS

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Outside Medical Examiner Says Cause of On Track Death is ‘Excited Delirium Syndrome’

Independent findings support school’s position that staff acted appropriately

AUSTIN, Texas (October 30, 2002) – Findings by an outside medical examiner and noted expert in forensic pathology indicate the death of a 17 year-old youth at On Track, a Central Texas outdoor therapeutic adventure program, was caused by “excited delirium syndrome” and not “traumatic asphyxia” as previously reported.

The review by Vincent DiMaio, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner for San Antonio in Bexar County Texas and noted author of forensic textbooks and numerous articles on traumatic asphyxia, came one day after the findings of the autopsy conducted by the Travis County Medical Examiner’s office were released to school officials. Dr. DiMaio was retained by The Brown Schools to review the facts in the death.

“Traumatic asphyxia has become a catch-all cause of death in a broad range of cases,” said Dr. DiMaio. “In this particular case, the highly excited state of the young man caused a major cardiac arrhythmia, and it was the subsequent stoppage of the heart that resulted in the involuntary release of the patient’s stomach contents. Based on my experience, it’s very clear that it was this stoppage of the heart that caused the fatality, and not the asphyxia noted in the report issued by the Travis County Medical Examiner’s office.”

Dr. DiMaio reviewed the autopsy at the request of school officials who were seeking to better understand the findings provided by the Travis County Medical Examiner to law enforcement officials in Mason County, according to spokeswoman Diane Huggins.

“We continue to be profoundly saddened by the tragic death of this young man and our deepest sympathies go out to his family and friends,” said Huggins. “This tragic situation merits a very careful examination of all of the facts. We need to affirm that our staff did everything possible to care for him. The findings of a noted forensic pathologist, author and scholar support our position that our staff responded appropriately and that all procedures were performed properly. We hope that the Travis County officials who are responsible for the autopsy will strongly consider Dr. DiMaio’s experience and assessment before issuing their final conclusions.”

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Cause of death 'Excited Delirium Syndrome'/2

Dr. DiMaio has been in contact with the Travis County Medical Examiners' office and is providing his work and review to officials there for their use, while Travis County Chief Medical Examiner Roberto Bayardo has said he will make all reports from his office on this matter available to Dr. DiMaio for his additional review.

On Track is an outdoor therapeutic program in Mason, Texas, operated by The Brown Schools for struggling adolescents, ages 13-17.

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