



Family awarded \$10 million in death of boy

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2012-12-07 17:47:05



SANTA ANA – An Orange County jury has awarded \$10 million to the family of a 3-year-old boy who died on a bus ride home from school, the family's attorneys said.

Kevin Cisler, a child with special needs, was found unresponsive on a bus parked in Aliso Viejo on March 25, 2011. Kevin was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead a short time later.

Attorneys for Melissa and Daniel Cisler, Kevin's parents, blame the boy's death on Capistrano Unified School District employee negligence, alleging in a wrongful-death lawsuit against the district that the boy was not properly latched into the bus.

District officials did not immediately respond to a message late Friday.

Kevin was diagnosed as a baby with Angelman Syndrome, a "neurogenetic disorder characterized by developmental delays, lack of speech, seizures and walking and balance disorders," his family's attorneys said.

"He couldn't walk or talk and couldn't operate his body like a normal child," said Kevin Boyle, a partner with Panish Shea & Boyle, which represented the family.

Kevin was enrolled in a special-education preschool, part of a program that also provided him with transportation to and from preschool.

The family's attorneys said district employees "failed to properly strap Kevin into his wheelchair or ensure that his chest harness was in place and that the lap belt and pommel required to keep him in his seat were secured." They also alleged that Kevin's wheelchair was placed directly behind the bus driver's seat, where Kevin couldn't be seen in the vehicle's mirrors.

During the nearly hourlong bus ride, the family's attorneys allege, Kevin slid down in the wheelchair until his chest harness was pressed around his neck, suffocating him. Authorities previously indicated that a parent taking another child off the bus noticed that Kevin was unresponsive and notified the driver, who called 911.

The verdict was announced Friday after two days of deliberation, Boyle said. The family's attorneys said the \$10 million award "is believed to be a record in Orange County for the wrongful death of a child."

Kevin's parents are "overwhelmed and honored" by the jury's decision, Boyle said.

"It was a horrible tragedy, but especially in this season, it is heartwarming to see that the jury system works and brought some closure to this family," Boyle added.

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