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Monday, October 16, 2017 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly



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'NIGHTMARE' AT DAYCARE

The family of 10-month-old Jacera Counts filed a lawsuit in her 2015 death at a North Philly daycare facility. 6

'Nightmare' in North Philly daycare led to infant's death, family says



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When you check your child in at daycare, you are leaving them in a stranger's care.

And sometimes, tragically, in a nightmare.

In the case of 10-month-old Jacera Counts, who fell sick in a daycare in North Philly in December 2015, medical care was just across

the street at Temple University Hospital.

But instead, daycare workers left her lying in a bed, then took her out the back door and put her on the hood of the car where they attempt-

ed mouth-to-mouth. It was only after her uncle, who was passing by coincidence, recognized Jacera, scooped her up and ran with her 100 feet across the street to the emergency room — where staff pronounced her dead on arrival.

"Jacera Counts involves the nightmare of finding out where our children are going during the day," said attorney Nadeem Bezar, who is representing the Counts family in a lawsuit against the daycare's owners. "Why they didn't call 911 or run the kid across the street? None of it makes sense."

Sisters Child Care, which was on Germantown Avenue near Erie Avenue, was shut down by the state within a day of Counts' death for that and a backlog of nearly 100 inspection violations. Owner Magnus Connor could not be reached for comment, and his attorneys did not respond to emails.

Bezar's lawsuit claim that negligence among management at Sisters contributed to Jacera's death. It alleges Sisters had insufficient staff for a clientele of some 50 pre-K children, no staff properly trained in CPR, and an unclean ventilation system that could possibly have contributed to Jacera's illness, which appeared to be respiratory in nature.

"We hope our suffering and experience will at least save lives," said

Thomasa Counts, Jacera's grandmother, who has filed a lawsuit against the daycare's owner, Magnus Connor.

Counts said the family misses Jacera terribly and still set a place at the table for her and includes her spirit in all of the family's plans.

Employees reported noticing that Jacera was ill that morning.

"She had the sniffles. She must have got progressively sicker in the morning," Bezar said. "She was not taking her formula, she was becoming lethargic and not as spunky as she might normally have been."

Bezar claimed employee accounts of the day are inconsistent over details, whether or not she was still breathing midday and who did what. But no one ever called 911 after the child fell ill, or, he said, explain why they took the child "completely in the wrong direction of where there was a cure, across the street."

Bezar emphasized that he supports affordable daycare and small businesses, but he strongly believes some small daycares need to realize that failing to invest more in CPR training, ventilation, surveillance cameras and other safety protocols can potentially lead to devastating loss later.

"We're not talking about tremendous costs here," Bezar said. "Let's save some lives here."

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Thomasa Counts, left, and Jacera Counts' sister Janiyah stand outside the abandoned play area at Sisters Child Care Center, where Jacera Counts died. KAITLYN MOORE