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IN THE THIRD DISTRICT COURT, SALT LAKE DEPARTMENT
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SALT LAKE, STATE OF UTAH

THE STATE OF UTAH

Plaintiff,

vs.

TRAVIS STACEY PETERSON

DOB: 07/31/1975

4574 W 4865 S

Kearns, UT 84118

OTN#: 68053107

SO#: 451083

SID#/BCI#: 3102277

Booking#: 24039524

Defendant.

GRAY, MELISSA

DOB: 12/30/1982

Co-Defendant(s)

Screened by: HEATHER LINDSAY

Assigned to: TO BE ASSIGNED

INFORMATION

DAO # 24.015022

BAIL: NO BAIL WARRANT

WARRANT/RELEASE: **CHARGES PRD**
08/30

Case No.

Co-Defendant DAO# 24.015174

The undersigned 4962 OFFICER ALLISON J ROSE - Unified Police Department, Agency Case No. CO24-78192, upon a written declaration states on information and belief that the defendant, TRAVIS STACEY PETERSON, committed the crime(s) of:

COUNT 1

AGGRAVATED CHILD ABUSE - INTENTIONALLY OR KNOWINGLY, 76-5-109.2(2)+(3A), a Second Degree Felony, as follows: That on or about January 1, 2023 through August 19, 2024 in Salt Lake County, the defendant did intentionally or knowingly inflict upon a child, serious physical injury or having the care or custody of such child, caused or permitted another to intentionally or knowingly inflict serious physical injury upon a child. To Wit: Locked E.P. in cell, first time

COUNT 2

AGGRAVATED CHILD ABUSE - INTENTIONALLY OR KNOWINGLY, 76-5-109.2(2)+(3A), a Second Degree Felony, as follows: That on or about January 1, 2023 through October 19, 2024 in Salt Lake County, the defendant did intentionally or knowingly inflict upon a child, serious physical injury or having the care or custody of such child, caused or permitted another to intentionally or knowingly inflict serious physical injury upon a child. To Wit: Locked E.P. in cell, last time

THIS INFORMATION IS BASED ON EVIDENCE OBTAINED FROM THE FOLLOWING WITNESSES:

ALLISON J ROSE and E.P.

DECLARATION OF PROBABLE CAUSE:

Your Declarant bases the Information upon the following:

The statement of Detective Rose of the Unified Police Department that on August 18, 2024, she responded to a residence in Salt Lake County on a child abuse investigation. Upon arrival, officers observed E.P. (13 years old) in a “pantry” in the hallway with a metal and wood gate in front of it. E.P. was lying on the floor behind the gate, which had a yellow lock on it. The area behind the gate did not allow for E.P. to fully extend his body when laying down.

Detective Rose spoke with defendants MELISSA GRAY and TRAVIS PETERSON.

GRAY reported she is the stepmom of E.P. and stated he had been locked up for the “past 24 hours.” GRAY said she had attempted to make his bunk bed “similar to a jail cell,” so that E.P. could understand “what jail was like.” GRAY told officers that she homeschooled E.P. and had created a reward system using “Peterson Bucks,” where E.P. could earn “Peterson Buck” for completed assignments. GRAY explained that E.P. would use the “Peterson Bucks” to purchase necessities such as meals and food. GRAY told officers that she was attempting to teach E.P. about sacrifice and occasionally “needing to go without to pay bills.” GRAY elaborated, telling officers that E.P. was allowed to leave the bunkbed cell when he asked to use the restroom, but that he was escorted to and from the bathroom and not allowed to roam about the house. GRAY informed officers that the bunkbed cell worked for a while, but she believed that E.P. could pick the five locks used on the cell and get out, so she put him in the caged-up hallway, placed a gun lock on the cage, and “locked him up.” GRAY stated that they had security cameras in the hallway so she and PETERSON could monitor E.P. at all times. GRAY said E.P. was “let out any time he needed to use the restroom.” They also gave him a book, and he was “fed throughout the day.” Post-Miranda, GRAY said she spanked E.P. with a belt over his clothes and on his bare buttocks. GRAY told officers that the punishment of spanking was important, but also the “anticipation of the spanking” was equally important. GRAY admitted E.P. had been locked up throughout the day without being let out.

Post-Miranda, PETERSON stated he believed he would lose his job if he were charged with child abuse. PETERSON told officers that he assisted in locking E.P. in the bunkbed cell, and was aware of GRAY creating the cage in the hallway and its intended use.

On August 21, 2024, a Forensic interview was conducted with E.P., who reported that he was not going to get dinner and began screaming. GRAY then spanked four times, once on the bare bottom. E.P. described the bare bottom spanking as leaving a “stinging sensation,” hurt, and made him cry. E.P. reported GRAY also struck him in the ankle and leg because she missed his bottom. E.P. said while he was at dinner, GRAY finished building the “cell” in the hallway, where he slept, had to stay in the cell all day, and then slept in there again. E.P. said he was in the cell when the police arrived at his house. E.P. noted that before the hallway cell was built, he slept in a cell in his bedroom, which had been constructed approximately a year and a half prior. E.P. described the cell in the hallway as “so small” that there was no room for him to spread out, and he had to sleep in a curled-up position. E.P. said the cell in the hallway was made of boards, dog gates, and a dog fence.

E.P. then described the cell in his bedroom had particle boards for the wall and the gate. E.P. said he couldn’t “get free” because there was a lock on his bedroom door. E.P. stated there were five locks in total, including a padlock. E.P. stated that once he was in his bedroom cell, he “lost a lot of privileges” and was only allowed to eat, sleep, and do schoolwork. E.P. said he was allowed to have a water bottle while “locked up.” GRAY then built a desk in his cell so he “could be locked up at all times and monitored.” E.P. said both GRAY and his dad, PETERSON, locked the door. E.P. said sometimes GRAY would let him out because he asked but then would put him back in the cell. E.P. described the first time he was locked in his bedroom cell. He believed it was a joke but realized they were serious about putting him in the cell and were only given three bathroom breaks, breakfast, and dinner. E.P. said he had to write things down on paper to “make requests,” but he eventually stopped receiving paper. E.P. stated he “felt sad” and “lonely” when he was in the cell and was only visited by their puppy.

MOTION FOR PRETRIAL DETENTION:

Pursuant to Utah Code 77-20-201(1) the State requests that Defendant be held without bail until further notice in this matter on the following grounds:

The defendant is charged with a felony and there is substantial evidence supporting the charge and clear and convincing evidence that the defendant would constitute a substantial danger to any other individual or to the community, or is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court, if released on bail;

For over one year, the defendants in this matter utilized multiple “jail cells” to control the victim, allowing him to eat twice a day and use the toilet three times a day. The victim reported he had no privileges and was in the cage(s) except for those specific time frames. The defendants also monitored him with cameras throughout the home. The defendants reported to law enforcement that they wanted the victim to know how it felt to be locked in a “jail cell” after getting in trouble a few days prior. They also reported they pulled the victim out of school and made him do “packets.” The defendants reported they gave the victim “Peterson Bucks” that they would allow him to earn by doing school work.

This also appears to not be the first time the defendants have used a cell to punish their children. Officers spoke with K.P., who is an adult child of GRAY and PETERSON. K.P. is reported to have an intellectual disability and lives with GRAY and PETERSON. K.P. told officers that he had let E.P. out of his bunkbed cell a few times over the course of the last year because E.P. had needed to use the restroom and GRAY had not been responding, but that he was otherwise not involved with E.P. The child of a previous girlfriend of PETERSON contacted police after the arrest was broadcast on the news. This person told officers that she had witnessed K.P. locked up in a similar cell to E.P.'s bunkbed cell when K.P. was younger. This person described K.P. as being kept in his cell for such prolonged periods that he was forced to defecate in a dresser drawer due to GRAY and PETERSON not responding to his pleas to be allowed to use the restroom. The person discovered the feces in the dresser drawer and reported it to B.A., E.P.'s mother.

The defendants in this matter have shown that they have no regard for the safety and welfare of this child and have kept him locked up consistently for over a year in makeshift cells. Both the defendants told officers that they believed they had done nothing wrong, that the victim was not traumatized, and that they were good parents. Defendant Peterson expressed concern that he would lose his job due to being charged with child abuse, and when asked why he thought he was going to be charged with child abuse he stated that "the country is cracking down on things like this." At no point in time did either defendant express any remorse for their actions or concern for the safety and health of the victim. The State believes that should the defendants be released from custody and this victim returned to their care, the victim will be in danger of suffering further abuse at the hands of his caretakers. Based on the seriousness of the allegations, the State requests the defendants be held in custody without bail.

Pursuant to Utah Code Annotated § 78B-18a-106 (2018) I declare under criminal penalty of the State of Utah that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

Executed on: 30th day of August, 2024

/s/ ALLISON J ROSE
Declarant

Authorized for presentment and filing:

SIM GILL, District Attorney

/s/ Heather Lindsay
Deputy District Attorney
30th day of August, 2024
HL / AW / DAO # 24.015022

OTHER PENDING CASES FOR THE DEFENDANT

Court	Court Case #	Trial Judge	DAO #	Charge
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