

### Hiawatha Woman Sentenced in Death of 4-year-old

(KNZA)--A Hiawatha woman convicted of charges in the beating death of a 4-year-old boy in March of last year has been sentenced to more than 10 years in prison.

District Judge Jim Patton sentenced 30-year-old Janice Summerford Monday in Brown County District Court to a total of 124 months in prison on charges of second-degree murder, felony child abuse and interference with a law enforcement officer.

Summerford entered an Alford plea last month to the charges stemming from the March 5th, 2013 death of Mekhi Boone, two days after he was taken unresponsive to a hospital. In an Alford plea, a defendant doesn't admit guilt but acknowledges prosecutors can likely prove the charge.

County Attorney Kevin Hill urged the court to give Summerford the maximum sentence possible. He said if it hadn't been for her actions, Mekhi wouldn't have died. Her attorney, Bill O'Keefe, argued there was no evidence his client participated in doing anything that caused the boy to die. Prior to sentencing, O'Keefe presented testimony from five witnesses--including Summerford.

The child's father, Lee Davis IV, is currently behind bars serving a nearly 20-year prison sentence after being convicted of second-degree murder and felony child abuse.

Authorities say Summerford was Davis' live-in girlfriend and the child's primary caregiver.

Summerford was arrested in April of last year following an investigation by the Brown County Sheriff's Department.

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