

### **Missouri Judge Says No Evidence Yet On Hailey Owens Murder Case** **News**

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([news-leader.com](http://news-leader.com)) - The man accused of killing 10-year-old Hailey Owens learned Wednesday that he'll be allowed to appear in street clothes, in person, for hearings. But he won't see all the evidence the state has against him just yet.



A hearing Wednesday for Craig Michael Wood lasted about a half hour, with mostly procedural and fairness issues discussed.

In his first appearance in court other than an initial one by video, Wood was brought into Judge Mark Powell's courtroom about 10 a.m.

Wood, who is charged with first-degree murder, child kidnapping and armed criminal action, is 46. His birthday was Tuesday.

Hailey's family members, including her parents, Jeff and Stacey Barfield, and about a half-dozen others, appeared in court to observe. About 50 people in all were present. Because the courtroom became crowded quickly, it is unclear if any of Wood's relatives were in attendance.

Wood, who worked as a coach and teaching assistant for Springfield Public Schools until he was arrested in the killing, did not speak at the hearing.

The judge ruled on several motions filed by the prosecution and defense. Most involved how the case will move forward; no further revelations about evidence emerged.

A key argument, common in criminal proceedings, came from the defense. Wood's attorneys want to see specific evidence more quickly than the prosecution wants to present it.

A motion to have the prosecution produce evidence before an upcoming court action called a preliminary hearing was overruled. The defense will have to wait for that hearing, which was reset Wednesday for 10 a.m. April 24.

Such hearings usually involve the prosecution using evidence to try to convince a judge that probable cause has been found for a case to go forward.

Both the defense and prosecution presented case law on the topic of evidence disclosure, with Public Defender Patrick Berrigan arguing that withholding evidence gives the prosecution "an unfair advantage." Powell, however, said he thought the Southern Appellate Court's ruling that evidence does not have to be shared at this stage in the case is clear.

Defense argues against cameras in court

One of the first rulings Wednesday was that Wood can wear street clothes in court.

He wore a shirt and tie and dress pants. The defense had asked for that ruling.

Defense attorneys often try to avoid having clients appear in jail garb to avoid the appearance of a presumption of guilt.

Previously, Wood had waived his right to appear in person and instead appear by video. However, Berrigan filed a motion this week to withdraw that motion and have Wood appear at all pretrial hearings.

The judge voiced support for personal appearances by the defendant in the future.

"I don't want to talk behind the accused's back," Powell said. "I want them to be here."

Cameras were permitted by the judge into Wednesday's hearing. The defense registered an objection to having still and video cameras present. Berrigan specifically asked that television cameras not be allowed.

Berrigan argued that TV coverage would make it difficult for Wood to "pick a jury in the town where he lives and grew up."

Berrigan also cited past media coverage of the case in his argument, including a Wednesday News-Leader story that reported on Children's Division documents. He presented a large stack of papers to the judge and prosecutor that he said included 96 media articles on the case.

A Children's Division document, received by the News-Leader in response to a Sunshine Law request, says Wood is the "perpetrator" of sexual abuse of Hailey. Wood, however, is not charged with any sexual attack on the child; authorities have not yet made public results of her autopsy.

Autopsy reports include information on the condition of a body, cause and manner of death and can confirm a sexual attack.

Asked by the News-Leader for comment on the Children's Division document, attorney David Ransin, who represents Hailey's mother and biological father, Stacey Barfield and Markus Owens, noted that document is part of mandatory reporting of child abuse or death and is vague. Certain information is not included or redacted, Ransin said, cautioning about drawing conclusions from the document's limited information.

Powell said he would take Berrigan's motion about cameras under advisement.

Authorities say Wood abducted Hailey from her neighborhood on Feb. 18 and took her to his home on East Stanford Street. Police say the body of Hailey was found in two garbage bags inside a plastic storage tote in Wood's basement, which smelled of bleach. Wood was arrested at his home a few hours after Hailey was reportedly kidnapped.

Ransin has filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against Wood on behalf of the parents.