

Mom Who Starved 3 Year Old Sentenced To 15 Years

News

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JOPLIN, Mo.(AP) — Despite her pleas for mercy, Beth Williams was sentenced Monday to 15 years in prison for her role in a child-abuse case that culminated two years ago with her severely underweight daughter clinging to life at a Joplin hospital.



Williams, 28, pleaded guilty Nov. 18 to felony child abuse with respect to the care of her daughter, Cameron Williams, who was taken to the emergency room of a Joplin hospital on July 1, 2012, in an unconscious state and with a blood sugar level of zero. The girl weighed barely 12 pounds at the age of 3.

Williams' plea agreement capped the prison time she might receive at no more than 15 years, which is the sentence her roommate, Christina Haidle, 28, received at a sentencing hearing in February. Haidle reportedly took care of both Williams' daughter and her own son while Williams, the manager of a local pizzeria, was at work.

Handcuffed and choking back tears Monday, Williams told Jasper County Circuit Judge Gayle Crane during her sentencing hearing that her "biggest mistake" was placing her daughter in the situation with Haidle, and that her "biggest and most sincere apology" was owed to Cameron.

"I love my daughter with all of my heart, and I'm sorry I failed to protect her as a mother should," she said, reading from a handwritten letter.

The prosecuting attorney's office had requested that Williams be sentenced to the maximum prison time allowed by her plea agreement. Kimberly Fisher, assistant prosecuting attorney, cited the testimony last month of a family practitioner with the Children's Center in Joplin, who alleged that Cameron had actually died and had to be revived in the hospital emergency room two years ago.

"The evil and cruelty done to this child I have never seen matched by another case," Fisher said. "She saw that child, she held that child, and she did not do anything but let that child starve to death."