

North Carolina Public Records Act Request

The following information was received in response to a public records request submitted under the North Carolina Public Records Law (G.S. §132-1) by Lives Cut Short. Records were provided by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner on January 27, 2025.

CANDID ID: NC_22_59

Decedent's Name: Riley Stephenson

Victim Age: 2 months

Sex: Female

Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino

Race: White

Date of Death: 06/28/2022

Death County: Buncombe

Cause of Death: Complications of multiple injuries, malnourishment, and pneumonia

Manner of Death: Homicide

Preliminary Circumstances: On June 28, 2022, Buncombe County authorities responded to a Candler home after 2-month-old Riley Leshae Hannah Stephenson was found unconscious and not breathing in her bassinet. An autopsy revealed Riley suffered from malnutrition, pneumonia in both lungs, and multiple healing fractures in her ribs, spine, collarbone, and limbs. She also had facial burns, abrasions, and bruises. The medical examiner cited inconsistencies in caregiver accounts, including claims of a fall during a bath and the use of a heating pad on the infant's face. No medical attention was reportedly sought despite several days of feeding difficulties. Riley's parents, Nickolas Stephenson and Diandra Fuhr-Farlow, were charged with first-degree murder and child abuse, inflicting serious bodily injury.