

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_776

Decedent's Name: Michael Mendoza

Victim Age: 4 years

Sex: Male

Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino

Race: White

Date of Death: 12/13/2022

Death County: Gaston

Cause of Death: Gunshot wound

Manner of Death: Homicide

Preliminary Circumstances: A 4-year-old boy died from a gunshot wound at a home on Cindy Lane in Gastonia, North Carolina. Investigators determined that the child and a sibling discovered an unsecured firearm in the home. While one sibling handled the weapon, it discharged and fatally shot the 4-year-old. The child's mother, father, and another adult relative who lived in the home were all charged with involuntary manslaughter, felony child abuse, and storing a firearm in a manner accessible to a minor.