Mother Accused of Failing to Give Her Child HIV Meds Is Sought by Police

The St. Louis woman, who is also HIV positive, has not appeared in court or surrendered the child to authorities.

June 17, 2021 By Trent Straube

The police department in St. Louis County, Missouri, is searching for a local woman who allegedly failed to give lifesaving HIV treatment to her child, who is now one year old, reports KMOV.com.

The mother, Britneyeaunya Blackmon, had tested positive for HIV while pregnant but allegedly ignored the advice of health care providers and refused to take the treatment that could have prevented mother-to-child transmission of the virus. As a result, the baby was born with HIV.

Apparently, Blackmon has not been giving her child the necessary antiretroviral treatment that can keep HIV in check. Health officials learned this, according to KMOV.com, because lab tests showed that the infant had a high viral load. When taken properly, HIV meds lower the among of virus in the blood and help make the illness manageable.

Because of the mother's alleged actions, the authorities obtained a protective order and charged the mother with child abuse or neglect. However, she is not in custody. Nor has she given the child to the authorities.

Anyone who has information about Blackmon can call the St. Louis County Police Department at l 314-615-5400.

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV is preventable. As the POZ Basics section on HIV and Family Planning explains:

> Thanks to highly effective antiretroviral (ARV) treatment, many people living with HIV are living healthy and productive lives. This has allowed many of us to pursue long-term goals and ambitions, such as starting and raising a family.
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> While having children is definitely an option for women living with HIV (and men), it requires careful planning with a health care provider. This includes "preconception" planning—exploring available options to help you conceive—and taking necessary steps

during pregnancy (whether its planned or unplanned) to protect your health and your baby's.

The good news is that there are many ways to plan a healthy pregnancy and a number of strategies to help you reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to your infant.

Whether you're thinking of starting a family or are already pregnant, familiarize yourself with the amazing medical advances available and discuss your various options with your health care team....

As for your baby's health, there is much to be optimistic about. Without proper HIV medical care, a woman living with HIV has a 25 percent chance of passing HIV to her baby. However, if she receives antiretroviral therapy while she is pregnant—and keeps her viral load undetectable—the risk of her passing the virus to her baby is 2 percent (or less). And if she is generally healthy, gets good prenatal care, controls risk factors (smoking, high blood pressure, etc.), the risks of premature delivery and birth defects are similar to those for HIV-negative women delivering babies.

For a closer look at the misconceptions about conception and HIV, read "Born Free," a cover story of POZ magazine, which is a sister publication of Real Health. The inspiring and informational article profiles two families—one in which the mother is HIV positive and another in which the father is living with the virus—and how they became parents of healthy HIV-negative babies thanks to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and treatment as prevention, also referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

Did you know that in 2019, African Americans represented 13% of the U.S. population but 43% of new HIV cases? In the South, they accounted for 52% of HIV diagnoses. You can learn more about HIV among African Americans—and several other minority populations—by visiting the HIV/AIDS Basics on POZ.com and clicking on the "HIV in Specific Populations" section. And check out the information in the write up for 2021's National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (#NBHAAD). You can read more about HIV and other health issues that affect the African American community in Real Health's Health Basics.

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