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2013

# Ayla Reynolds Timeline

On Dec. 17, 2011, Justin DiPietro calls 911 to report his 20-month old daughter Reynolds missing after finding her bed empty.

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## Dec. 15, 2011

Trista Reynolds files for full custody of her 20-month-old daughter, Ayla Reynolds, in Cumberland County. Ayla had been in the care of her father, Justin DiPietro, since October, when Reynolds went into a drug rehabilitation program.

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## Dec. 16, 2011, 10 p.m.

Justin DiPietro sees his daughter for the last time, lying in her bed in their home at 29 Violette Ave. in Waterville, he later tells police. She is wearing one-piece pajamas with the words “Daddy’s Princess.” Her left arm, broken in an accidental fall three weeks earlier, is in a soft splint and a sling.

## Dec. 17, 2011, 8:51 a.m.

DiPietro calls 911 to report Ayla is missing after finding her bed empty. Waterville police, firefighters and

wardens from the Maine Warden Service search the neighborhood by foot and air. Waterville and Maine State Police detectives search the house.

### **Dec. 18, 2011**

FBI agents, police dogs, neighbors and other volunteers join the house-to-house and neighborhood searches. Wardens scour the banks of nearby Messalonskee Stream. Police interview DiPietro, his sister Elisha DiPietro and his girlfriend, Courtney Roberts, all of whom were in the house the night Ayla disappeared.

### **Dec. 19, 2011**

Police seize two vehicles, one of them registered to DiPietro and the other to his girlfriend, Roberts, of Portland. Police say DiPietro and Reynolds are cooperating. Reynolds appears on ABC's "Good Morning America" and HLN's "Nancy Grace" shows. The search swells to 70 law enforcement agents, including wardens looking at Messalonskee Stream with an airboat and circling the area in an airplane.

### **Dec. 20, 2011**

DiPietro releases a statement through Waterville police saying he doesn't know what happened to Ayla. Investigators drain a section of Messalonskee Stream to look for clues, and examine garbage bins, garages, backyards, ball fields and woods near the home. FBI Child Abduction Rapid Deployment Team canvasses Waterville neighborhoods. Police say it's still a missing child case. They've received more than 100 tips.

### **Dec. 21, 2011**

The search expands across Waterville with help from 50 members of the Maine Association for Search and Rescue. Nearly 100 people attend a candlelight vigil at a local church.

### **Dec. 22, 2011**

Six days into the search, investigators put crime scene tape around 29 Violette Ave., two of the state's top homicide investigators visit the house and intensify the search for clues.

### **Dec. 23, 2011**

Overnight snow ends the ground search. Reynolds tells NBC's "Today" show that she blames DiPietro for not keeping Ayla safe and hopes her daughter will be home for Christmas. Police get media inquiries from across the country. Dozens gather for a candlelight vigil at Congress Square in Portland.

**Dec. 24, 2011**

Waterville police appeal for a break in media coverage so they can do their work “outside the microscope.”  
Crime-scene evidence tape seals all doors and windows of the house.

**Dec. 26, 2011**

Ten days into the investigation, police say for the first time that they don’t believe Ayla left the house on her own. Community members offer a \$30,000 reward for evidence. A state police evidence response team van is parked in the driveway.

**Dec. 27, 2011**

Investigators from four police agencies continue the search and follow up on more than 300 tips.

**Dec. 28, 2011**

DiPietro issues a second statement through Waterville police, repeating that he doesn’t know what happened to Ayla. The Warden Service ends the last of the large-scale ground searches in Waterville.

**Dec. 29, 2011**

Reynolds appears on the “Today” show, pleading with DiPietro to communicate with her.

**Dec. 30, 2011**

Police announce foul play is suspected in what is now a criminal case. The Maine State Police Major Crimes Unit takes the lead in the investigation, and Massachusetts detectives join the effort, providing investigative tools at the house.

**Dec. 31, 2011**

State police release the house at 29 Violette Ave. back to the occupants.

**Jan. 1, 2012**

The DiPietro family is seen back at the home.

**Jan. 2, 2012**

DiPietro grants interviews to the Morning Sentinel and NBC’s “Today” show and pleads for Ayla’s safe return.

### **Jan. 4, 2012**

DiPietro grants a second interview to the Morning Sentinel and challenges Nancy Grace to spend a day with him. He says Ayla broke her arm when he fell on her in November. His mother, Phoebe DiPietro, who owns 29 Violette Ave., says she had to sign her home over to investigators and the family was not allowed in for two weeks.

### **Jan. 6-Jan. 8, 2012**

DiPietro appears on New England Cable News to discuss his efforts to find Ayla, Phoebe DiPietro tells CNN she didn't hear anything in her home the night before Ayla was reported missing, then appears the next day to clarify she was not in the home on the night before Ayla was reported missing.

### **Jan. 10, 2012**

State police and a Warden Service dive team search parts of the Kennebec River and Messalonskee Stream. McCausland says investigators have received more than 600 tips, but they need more. McCausland adds that police encourage Ayla's family members to speak to the news media about the search. Earlier, Reynolds appears on the "Today" show and says she had spoken to DiPietro, but hadn't gotten "the whole truth" about what happened the night Ayla disappeared.

### **Jan. 13, 2012**

In a third interview with the Morning Sentinel, DiPietro says he took a polygraph test, but that police didn't show him the results. McCausland says DiPietro "knows how he did, because we told him." DiPietro contends that being told the results is irrelevant if he cannot see the results. He added, "I know I went in there and smoked it. I told the truth." McCausland says special training is required to interpret the printed lines on a polygraph.

### **Jan. 16, 2012**

Angela Harry, a DiPietro acquaintance, launches a website that describes the events of Dec. 16 and 17. The account, Harry says, was compiled from near-daily phone conversations with DiPietro.

### **Jan. 17, 2012**

A second candlelight vigil is held in Waterville. DiPietro attends with his brother, Lance DiPietro, and friends.

### **Jan. 19, 2012**

Reynolds says she has taken a polygraph but wasn't able to complete it because of a medical condition.

### **Jan. 25, 2012**

Waterville police deny a request by the Morning Sentinel for an audio recording or transcript of DiPietro's Dec. 17 911 call. Deputy Chief Charles Rumsey cites Maine law saying release of "investigative intelligence" could hinder investigation.

### **Jan. 27, 2012**

The Reynolds family announces that two more of Ayla's maternal family members have taken polygraph tests. Ayla's uncle Ronnie Reynolds passed the test the day before and her maternal grandmother, Becca Hanson, couldn't complete the test because she was on medication.

### **Jan. 28, 2012**

McCausland announces that police doubt Ayla was abducted from her home and DiPietro's explanation "doesn't pass the straight-face test."

Earlier that day, police announce that blood was found at 29 Violette Ave. during the December search. Shortly after the announcement, DiPietro and Reynolds appear together at a third vigil in Waterville. It is the first time they have seen each other since Ayla disappeared.

### **Jan 29, 2012**

McCausland confirms that the blood found in the Violette Avenue home is Ayla's.

### **Feb. 3, 2012**

State police and Warden Service dive teams return to the Kennebec River and Messalonskee Stream. At a news conference, McCausland says police need more tips.

At 11:15 p.m., Phoebe DiPietro calls 911 to report vandalism at her home after two windows are shattered from the outside. No suspects were immediately found.

### **Feb. 13, 2012**

Augusta attorney Steve Bourget announces he has been representing Phoebe and Elisha DiPietro since early January and they have no idea what happened to Ayla.

In Portland, Ayla's maternal family announces that state police told them Justin DiPietro bought a life insurance policy on his daughter shortly after she was under his care.

Waterville police summon Jeremy Hanson, 19, of Clinton on a charge of vandalizing the DiPietro home on Feb. 3.

### **Feb. 28, 2012**

DiPietro and supporters, the Tudela family, in an interview with the Morning Sentinel, contend that a kidnapping is plausible, despite contrary claims by state police. DiPietro said there are good reasons to believe Ayla was kidnapped, but wouldn't say what they were.

### **March 3, 2012**

Phoebe DiPietro speaks at the fourth vigil of about 100 people in Waterville's Castonguay Square. Justin DiPietro does not attend because of threats against him.

### **March 18, 2012**

Ayla's stepgrandfather, Jeff Hanson, launches answersforayla.com, a blog that purports to have inside information from state police. The blog contends investigators found more than a cup of blood in the basement at 29 Violette Ave., but police won't confirm that.

### **March 24, 2012**

More than 100 searchers scour areas of Waterville, Oakland, Fairfield and Norridgewock. Searchers discover the remains of Steven C. Brandon of Waterville, who had been missing since February 2004, but find nothing to lead them to Ayla.

At a news conference, McCausland asks residents in Greater Kennebec County to search their property for signs of the missing toddler. He also says communication between Ayla's paternal family and investigators has "basically stopped." Bourget says that is untrue of his clients.

McCausland says state police, Waterville police and the Warden Service have spent about \$100,000 in overtime pay during the investigation. Police Chief Joseph Massey later estimates the cost of the investigation could be as high as \$500,000.

### **March 28, 2012**

Justin, Elisha and Phoebe DiPietro tell the Morning Sentinel that communication has stopped because investigators won't answer their questions.

### **March 29, 2012**

Reynolds tells The Associated Press Ayla needed constant attention. She wonders whether DiPietro may have been frustrated by her.

#### **April 4, 2012**

Ayla's maternal family calls for people across Maine and beyond to search their property on Ayla's second birthday. The family calls it a Gift for Ayla. They also organize a vigil in downtown Portland; more than 100 people attend.

#### **April 19, 2012**

Family, friends and community members attend a prayer vigil for Ayla at the Church of God in Waterville, which was organized by her uncle, Lance DiPietro. The three adults who were with Ayla on Dec. 16 – Justin DiPietro, Elisha DiPietro and Courtney Roberts – attend the vigil. News cameras and most reporters are not allowed to attend.

#### **April 25, 2012**

Police recover items from the Kennebec River. McCausland says investigators don't know if the items, brought to the state crime lab, are related to Ayla.

#### **May 5, 2012**

At a walk to raise awareness about Ayla, Elisha DiPietro tells a Morning Sentinel reporter that she took a polygraph exam and "did fine," but wouldn't say if she passed. McCausland won't confirm whether she took an exam.

#### **May 8, 2012**

Police drain a diversion channel of a Waterville dam to search for evidence. McCausland said some items were removed from the scene by detectives and sent to the crime lab for processing as potential evidence.

#### **May 18, 2012**

Reynolds says police told her the items retrieved from the Kennebec River on May 8 are unrelated to the case.

#### **May 31, 2012**

Maine State Police and Waterville police say at a press conference Ayla is likely dead.

Attorney John Nale announces that the \$30,000 reward for information expires June 30.

## **June 30, 2012**

The \$30,000 reward for information expires at the end of the day. A candlelight vigil is held at 29 Violette Ave. from 9 p.m. to midnight.

## **July 2, 2012**

The DiPietro family removes the teddy bear shrine that has been on the lawn of 29 Violette Ave. since shortly after Ayla's disappearance.

## **July 14, 2012**

Reynolds holds A Benefit Walk For Ayla in Portland from Monument Square to Deering Oaks to mark the 200th day since her disappearance. Reynolds says she wants to share the walk she used to do nearly every day with Ayla.

## **July 17, 2012**

Searchers find "nothing substantial" during another search of the Kennebec River and its banks from Lockwood Dam at the Hathaway Creative Center and upstream to the Hydro Kennebec Dam. The search coincides with the seven-month mark of the investigation.

During the previous weekend, a "missing" sign, with a picture and information about Ayla, was put up at 29 Violette Ave.

## **Oct. 5, 2012**

State police detectives search Messalonskee Stream, which was drained by Kennebec Water District for routine maintenance. Detectives cover a half-mile of riverbank upsteam and downstream of the North Street bridge. Nothing is found.

## **Dec. 14, 2012**

McCausland says at a press conference communication between investigators and Justin, Elisha and Phoebe has improved. Bourget says police presented his clients with physical evidence from the case and the DNA evidence from the basement matches Ayla, but it "isn't necessarily blood."

## **Dec. 17, 2012**

A group of about 20 people lights candles and sings Christmas carols in front of 29 Violette Ave. in an event called Peace for Ayla. Although the house is well lit inside and out, there is no sign of its occupants



during the vigil.

### **July 25, 2013**

DiPietro pleads not guilty to domestic violence assault after he was charged July 6 with grabbing and pushing former girlfriend Roberts while they were arguing in Portland.

DiPietro tells a Morning Sentinel reporter he is living in his mother's basement on Violette Avenue and "trying to live a normal life."

### **Sept. 10, 2013**

DiPietro is arrested in South Portland for violating bail conditions – possession of alcohol.

### **Sept. 26, 2013**

Reynolds and DiPietro relatives quarrel inside and outside the Cumberland County Courthouse in Portland at DiPietro's hearing. Reynolds said that while the hearing wasn't related to Ayla's disappearance, it was an opportunity to raise awareness that no one had been charged.

DiPietro pleads guilty to violating conditions of release.

### **Oct. 23, 2013**

A morning-long search by state police and game wardens in woods off Hussey Hill Road in Oakland turns up nothing but animal bones. McCausland said the search was prompted by one of more than 1,400 tips they've now received, and the area has come up three times in tips. He said the investigation is ongoing and investigators continue to talk to family members.

"We won't stop searching until we find Ayla," he says in a news conference.

— *From staff reports*

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