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Mid-Maine

## Judge declares missing toddler Ayla Reynolds dead

By Nok-Noi Ricker and Christopher Cousins, Special to the BDN • September 27, 2017 2:06 pm

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Ayla Reynolds

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Missing Waterville toddler Ayla Reynolds, the focal point of the largest criminal investigation in Maine State Police history, has officially been declared deceased by a Cumberland County probate judge.

Ayla Bell Reynolds died on or about Dec. 17, 2011, Judge Joseph Mazziotti officially declared, according to documents filed Wednesday.

Ayla Reynolds disappeared from Waterville in December 2011 and hasn't been seen since. Her mother, Trista Reynolds of Scarborough, sought the declaration of death in order to pursue further legal action, including a possible wrongful death lawsuit against Ayla's biological father, Justin DiPietro, and possibly others.

Mazziotti concluded the hearing after less than 30 minutes.

"We would like to find out what happened to Ayla," said attorney William Childs, who represents Reynolds, outside the courthouse on Thursday. "Where that leads us, we'll see."

Maine State Police Lt. Jeffrey Love testified that police have received more than 1,500 tips since her disappearance.

"We have not received any information, nor is there any evidence that Ayla is alive," Love told the court.

Ayla, then 20 months old, was [reported missing](#) on Dec. 17, 2011, while she was staying in Waterville with her father, Justin DiPietro, his sister, Alisha DiPietro, and Courtney Roberts of Portland, who was Justin DiPietro's

girlfriend.

DiPietro told investigators his daughter must have wandered away from the house on her own or was abducted during the night, but the Maine State Police later said they had ruled out that story and that [the girl's disappearance was the result of foul play](#). They further said the adults in the home were withholding information, and in January 2012 revealed they found Ayla's blood in the basement of the DiPietro home.

Maine Department of Public Safety spokesman Stephen McCausland said the latest court proceedings do not affect the investigation.

“The probate proceedings have no bearing on the criminal investigation, which remains open and active,” he said in a written statement to the Bangor Daily News.

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