

NEWS

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Judge grants extension for serving Justin DiPietro, father of Ayla Reynolds, in wrongful death suit

Though the deadline for serving the father of missing toddler Ayla Reynolds expired March 17, a Cumberland County Superior Court justice this week gave the attorney for her mother a 60-day extension so he can file notice via the newspaper.

BY [AMY CALDER](#) MORNING SENTINEL



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A Cumberland County Superior Court justice has approved a request by the mother of missing toddler Ayla Reynolds and her lawyer for 60 more days in which to serve the child's father with a wrongful death suit.

William Childs, attorney for Trista Reynolds, said Tuesday he plans to place a legal notice soon in the Morning Sentinel, in Waterville, to notify Justin DiPietro of the lawsuit since extensive efforts to serve him in person have been unsuccessful and his whereabouts are unknown.



Ayla Reynolds

“The court has issued an order whereby we have 60 days to complete publication in the Waterville Sentinel and to have a process server leave a copy of the complaint at Justin DiPietro’s last known address in Los Angeles, California — Winnetka, California,” Childs said Tuesday in a phone interview.

Ayla was 20 months old when she disappeared from her paternal grandmother’s house at 29 Violette Ave. in Waterville where the child had been staying with DiPietro. He reported Ayla missing the morning of Dec. 17, 2011, and has claimed she was abducted.

But police say they believe Ayla is dead, and a judge in 2017 declared her so, paving the way for Trista Reynolds to file the wrongful death suit, a civil suit, in December 2018.

No one has been charged in the case, though police have said all along that the people staying in the Waterville house the night Ayla disappeared know more about her disappearance than they are saying.

DiPietro, his sister Elisha DiPietro, and Justin’s then-girlfriend, Courtney Roberts, were in the house that night. Ayla’s grandmother, Phoebe DiPietro, the owner of the home, was not there.

A call placed late Tuesday afternoon to Trista Reynolds was not immediately returned. But her stepfather, Jeff Hanson, commented in an email Tuesday:

“Justin obviously knows by now that we are looking for him. He has the answers we are looking for... why would he hide from that?”

Childs says he plans to run the legal notice for two weeks in the Morning Sentinel starting next week. He has 60 days to

file the newspaper document with the court to prove it was published. A process server in California will deliver a copy of the complaint to Justin DiPietro's last known address in Winnetka, according to Childs.

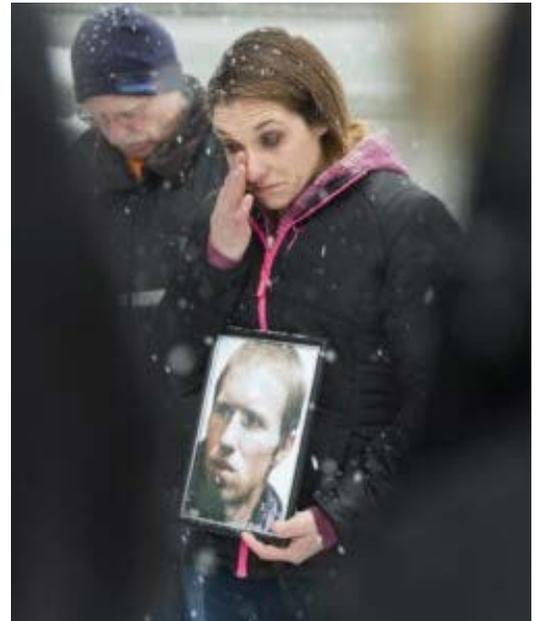
"Then, discovery can begin in earnest," he said.

Childs said the justice will issue a discovery schedule whereby Childs can depose witnesses. He said he expects he will be able to conduct discovery from about May of this year to about February 2020.

Childs on March 13 [filed court documents](#) outlining his efforts to locate Justin DiPietro, including using private detectives in both Maine and California and searching government records and electronic databases.

Childs' court documents include private investigator affidavits, as well as an affidavit by a Kennebec County Sheriff's deputy, Allen Wood, who said he tried to serve Justin DiPietro at 29 Violette Ave. in Waterville but was told by DiPietro's mother that he does not live there and has not lived there for two years.

Nelson Tucker, a server in California, went to Justin DiPietro's last known address in Winnetka but was told he had moved out last July. Kevin Cady, a licensed private investigator in Maine, said he could not find a more current address for Justin DiPietro, though he searched social media, criminal records, driver's license and vehicle information, property deeds, hunting and weapons permits and more. Tucker also searched social media, online telephone directories, a California criminal index, medical facilities, post office records and other documents.



A judge has given Trista Reynolds and her attorney, William Childs, 60 days to publish a legal notice to notify Justin DiPietro of the wrongful death lawsuit they are bringing against him in the death of Ayla Reynolds. *Portland Press Herald file photo by Derek Davis*

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