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Woman posts bail in grandchild's drug death

Heidelberg Township resident, 51, charged; granddaughter was 1

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Penny S. Kochel

A woman accused of killing her 1-year-old granddaughter in 2009 by giving the baby a fatal dose of morphine was released from Berks County Prison on Friday after posting \$100,000 bail.

Penny S. Kochel, 51, of the first block of Jay Bee Drive, Heidelberg Township, is charged with third-degree murder, aggravated assault, drug delivery resulting in death and related offenses in the death of Leanna E. McEntee of Levittown, Bucks County.

Kochel told police that Leanna would not stop crying, so she gave the baby a teething tablet provided by her daughter-in-law, Colleen R. Long, of Levittown, and rubbed tequila on the baby's gums to numb the pain.

State police said toxicology tests revealed the presence of the painkiller morphine in Leanna's body.

Judge Paul M. Yatron ordered Kochel not to have any contact with children under 18 other than a 17-year-old son living with her. She also has an 18-year-old son at home.

Yatron set bail at \$100,000 at the request of Kochel's attorney, James M. Polyak.

The law provides her the right to be released on bail because, as Polyak argued, she has ties to the community, has relationships with family, is employed, has no criminal history and has never used false identification, Yatron said.

Polyak said she does not use drugs, does not drink alcohol more than once or twice a month and doesn't have a passport.

Assistant District Attorney Kevin F. Howard told Yatron that he had no reason to dispute the facts Polyak presented and agreed with the bail amount.

Investigators said Kochel took two or three Oxycontin and morphine pills at a time from prescriptions belonging to her brother, Norman M. Anderson Jr. of Robesonia, who was being treated for cancer. He died two weeks after Leanna.

According to court records:

Long and her husband, Matthew N. McEntee, were going away for the weekend.

On May 8, 2009, they met Kochel at an Amity Township gas station, where they gave her over-the-counter teething tablets and turned over Leanna and her brother, Ryan, age unavailable, so Kochel could baby-sit them in her former home in the 6800 block of Penn Avenue, Lower Heidelberg Township.

The following day Kochel applied the drug and tequila when she tried to get Leanna to take a nap and Leanna wouldn't stop crying.

The next morning, Kochel's husband, Robert, found Leanna unresponsive and called 9-1-1.

Contact Mary Young: 610-478-6292 or myyoung@readingeagle.com.