

# Court affirms convictions of Williamses in adopted daughter's death

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A state appellate court ruled Monday that Carri and Larry Williams were justly convicted by a Skagit County jury in 2013 for their roles in the abuse and death of their adopted Ethiopian daughter.

Both Williamses, who were sentenced to decades in prison, appealed their convictions following a seven-week trial in Mount Vernon.

Carri Williams, 45, was sentenced to just under 37 years in prison after she was found guilty of homicide by abuse in the death of Hana Williams, the couple's adopted daughter. Carri Williams was also convicted on one count of first-degree assault of her adopted Ethiopian son.

Her husband, Larry Williams, 52, was sentenced to nearly 28 years on first-degree manslaughter and first-degree assault of a child.

Skagit County prosecutors argued at trial that the couple abused and neglected their adopted children over several years.

The adopted children, unlike the Williamses' biological children, were fed frozen food and wet sandwiches, according to testimony. Hana was sent to a closet and sometimes had to sleep in a locked shower room or a barn behind the house.

Hana died of hypothermia after collapsing in the family's backyard on May 11, 2011. Her condition was hastened by malnutrition and a stomach condition.

Hana's age was never officially determined, but she was believed to be about 13.

Carri Williams appealed her convictions on claims the court made multiple errors during her trial. She contended there was not enough evidence to support the prosecution's argument that Hana was younger than 16 when she died.

The girl's age was a key element in Carri Williams' conviction on homicide by abuse, and was the focus of much testimony at trial.

Under Washington law, homicide by abuse only applies when the victim is younger than 16.

In their written opinion, the appellate judges acknowledged the jury heard conflicting testimony on Hana's age.

The judges found sufficient evidence was presented to show Hana was under 16.

The judges highlighted testimony from Dr. Carolyn Roesler, who treated Hana at an orphanage in Ethiopia before the girl was brought to live at the Williamses' home in

Sedro-Woolley. Roesler's testimony backed the prosecutors' argument that Hana was within the age to support conviction of homicide by abuse.

Larry Williams argued in his appeal that not enough evidence was presented at trial to prove he played a criminal role in the death and abuse and that his lengthy sentence was extreme. He blamed his wife for Hana's death, arguing on appeal that "the evidence at trial fell well short of establishing [his] guilt as an accomplice" to manslaughter, according to Monday's opinion.

But appellate judges disagreed.

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