



# KANSAS WILL PAY \$1 MILLION OVER THE MURDER OF A BOY TORTURE VICTIM WHOSE BODY WAS FED TO PIGS - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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*Photo: This undated file photo provided by the Wyandotte County Detention Center in Kansas City, Kan., shows Michael Jones, the father of the victim.*

Kansas will pay \$1 million to settle a lawsuit over a 7-year-old boy's murder in 2015 alleging that the state's child welfare agency should have removed him from an abusive home before he was starved and tortured and his body was fed to pigs.

Gov. Laura Kelly and top leaders of the Kansas Legislature approved the settlement during a brief public meeting Tuesday after conferring with state Attorney General Kris Kobach's top deputy in private for 30 minutes. [The lawsuit](#) was filed in 2017 in Wyandotte County in the Kansas City area by the boy's mother, maternal grandmother and adult sister, and a district court trial was scheduled for April 2025.

The boy, Adrian Jones, was living with his father, [Michael Jones](#), and his stepmother, Heather Jones, in Kansas City, Kansas, when he died. Both are serving 25 years-to-life prison sentences for his murder, and authorities said the boy was [beaten and locked naked in a shower stall](#) for months as a closed-circuit surveillance camera recorded his deteriorating condition.

The Kansas Department for Children and Families received reports that Adrian was being abused several years before his death, but its last physical contact with him was almost four years before his death, according to [more than 2,000 pages of records](#) released in 2017 by the agency. The records showed that the three of them moved frequently between communities in Kansas and Missouri.

"This has been a long journey for Adrian's family," said Matt Birch, an attorney representing the family members. "The most important thing for the family was to hopefully make a change and make this less likely to happen in the future."

The family members' lawsuit argued that the state and social workers could have "stepped in and rescued" Adrian "at any point during the child's lengthy, unimaginable ordeal" but "chose to act like disinterested bystanders." The Kansas agency argued that frequent moves made it difficult to keep tabs on the boy.

Kansas Senate Minority Leader Dinah Sykes, a Kansas City-area Democrat and one of the lawmakers who approved the settlement, said

Wednesday that she believes the state faced “a lot of liability” legally for what happened.

But Kelly told reporters Wednesday at the Statehouse that the issue wasn't the potential damages in a lawsuit but the litigation distracting it from “the mission at hand” of improving the child welfare system.

“It really had to do with wanting to get that settled and not spend time litigating in courts for what could be definitely months, maybe even years,” she said.

The resolution approving the settlement, made public Wednesday, shows that the department will pay half of the settlement and the other half will come from a special state fund that covers damages in lawsuits.

An attorney and its employees in the lawsuit did not immediately return a telephone message Wednesday seeking comment. Kobach's office also did not comment.

The Democratic governor and leaders of the Republican-controlled Legislature approved the settlement during a public meeting, but its open portions totaled less than five minutes before and after the closed session with Chief Deputy Attorney General Dan Burrows.

While Kelly read the lawsuit's title before the vote, neither she nor the lawmakers discussed details publicly Tuesday, following what has been a standard practice for years. Typically, there is no formal follow-up announcement to the public.

Told about the \$1 million settlement Wednesday, state Rep. Susan Concannon, a Republican from western Kansas who chairs the Legislature's Joint Committee on Child Welfare Oversight, said: “I am a little bit surprised that it's not more than that.”

A multiyear legislative review of the child welfare system followed the boy's death. In 2021, “Adrian's Law” created the committee Concannon heads and required officers and caseworkers to visually observe children who are alleged victims of abuse or neglect.

The state also has moved to improve doctors' training in recognizing abuse and to provide “wrap-around” services for troubled families.

Birch said that he and the family hope that through the lawsuit and 2021 law “there will be more eyes on these kids.”

Adrian's family members also filed a lawsuit in 2017 in Jackson County, Missouri, also in the Kansas City-area, against officials in that state. The case was settled in 2020, but the details were not immediately available, and Birch said he couldn't comment.

Adrian's remains were found in November 2015 in a pigsty on his father and stepmother's rental property after officers responded to a domestic violence call. Heather Jones accused Michael Jones of beating and choking her, according to affidavits and search warrants later released by authorities.

According to court records the Joneses used increasingly severe methods to control the boy's behavior, including strapping him to an inversion table, handcuffing him and shocking him with a device called a Zap Enforcer. He also suffered from “extreme starvation,” court records said.