



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update – Missing 8-Year-Old Juvenile

HAYWARD, Calif., Mar. 12, 2021— On Tuesday, Mar. 8, 2022, at about 6:00 PM, officers responded to the 1000 block of B St regarding the report of an at-risk missing juvenile. The reporting party, a family member of the juvenile, told officers she had just received information that caused her to believe the juvenile could be missing and wanted to ascertain the child's welfare.

During the investigation, officers identified the name of the juvenile as 8-year-old Sophia Mason, who was last seen in the custody of her mother, 31-year-old Samantha Johnson. Officers conducted a record check and attempted to locate the mother and child at all known prior addresses, including locations family members provided as a possible location where the two could be staying, but the two were not located.

Of the locations it was believed the two could be, an address near the 500 block of Barclay Way in Merced, CA was discovered. Merced Police Department conducted at least two outside assists at the address, but there was no answer at the door.

On Mar 10, 2022, as detectives continued their investigative efforts, it was determined probable cause existed to arrest Johnson for corporal injury on a child. Detectives also received information Johnson may be at an address in Newark. Hayward PD Officers responded to the area, located Johnson, and took her into custody.

Further investigation took place and detectives received information re-confirming Sophia may be located at the previously identified address in Merced. Merced PD was provided with the updated information, who then authored a search warrant of the residence. The search warrant was executed, and Merced PD located a deceased child inside the residence. Merced

PD detectives and crime scene investigators processed the scene and Merced County Coroner's Office is working to positively identify the child.

Merced PD has since added a murder charge against Johnson, in addition to the corporal injury and obstructing an officer's investigation charges filed by Hayward PD.

An arrest warrant has also been issued for Johnson's boyfriend, 34-year-old Dhante Jackson, who resides at the home where the deceased child was located. Jackson is outstanding and it is believed he is evading arrest. Jackson is known to frequent the Bay Area.

We want the community to know we have worked tirelessly on this investigation and will continue to do all we can to ensure there is resolution in this matter and that justice is served.

We also want to thank the community for their support and concern for Sophia's welfare. This is a difficult and emotional time for Sophia's family, and we cannot begin to fathom their grief.

Hayward PD Detective Kell is handling Hayward PD's investigation. The report number for Hayward PD's case is 22-13287.

Merced PD has assumed the homicide investigation and has asked anyone with information related to this incident to contact Detective John Pinnegar at (209)388-7712. Their report number for the incident is 22-14506.