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# Adoptive parents of convicted killer sue social workers

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Strohmeyer confessed to killing 7-year-old Sherrice Iverson at a Nevada casino in May 1997

*From Correspondent Jennifer Auther*

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[LOS ANGELES](#) (CNN) -- The adoptive parents of a self-confessed killer have filed a lawsuit against Los Angeles County and its adoption workers, claiming social workers withheld crucial information that would have stopped them from adopting him as an infant.

Just before he was set to go on trial for murder a little more than a year ago, Jeremy Strohmeyer dropped his defense and told the court he killed 7-year-old [Sherrice Iverson](#) with premeditation and deliberation in a casino restroom in Primm, Nevada, in May of 1997.

"It could have been prevented by me, had I been armed with the knowledge I have now -- but also by others, had they done the right thing," Strohmeyer said at his sentencing hearing.

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Strohmeyer's adoptive parents contend they were not told by adoption workers that Jeremy's birth mother was mentally ill

The knowledge he referred to was that his biological mother had severe mental problems.

"They knew that she had been hospitalized, Jeremy's birth mother, 60 times prior to Jeremy's birth," said his adoptive mother, Winnie Strohmeyer. "That she had been diagnosed in 1976 as a chronic schizophrenic. Why would you withhold that information?"

The Strohmeyers said prior to Jeremy's adoption they told social workers they could not accept a child with a family history of mental illness or retardation.

The couple contend they were misled by the county of Los Angeles, specifically in a letter in which the agency characterized the mental illness in Jeremy Strohmeyer's biological mother as a manifestation of drug abuse.

That letter came six months after the adoption was approved.

The case worker wrote that Jeremy's natural mother "appeared mentally ill." The family's lawyer said that was fraud.

"Had the county been forthright and been truthful with the Strohmeyers, they would never have been matched with Jeremy," said attorney Gregory W. Smith.

## Agency has 2 weeks to check records

All Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services has said is that back in 1980, when the Strohmeyer's adopted Jeremy, a different agency was responsible.

"Since we became a department in 1984, we have always been required to fully disclose to prospective adoptive parents all the information we have on the child and the child's family," said Renee Windsor, deputy director for the Department of Children and Family Services.

The Strohmeyers presented their case to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday. The board instructed the county adoption agency to review its policies and report back in two weeks.

"The supreme sacrifice has been made of two lovely children, Jeremy and Sherrice," said Winnie Strohmeyer.

The Strohmeys vowed they'll continue to support their adopted son who will spend the rest of his life behind prison bars.

While confessing to police, Jeremy Strohmeier said he killed Sharrice because he "wanted to experience death."

During his sentencing hearing, he told the court that had he known earlier about his birth parents he could have sought treatment for addictive tendencies and a possible genetic predisposition toward mental illness.

Strohmeier, a former high school honor student from Long Beach, California, sexually assaulted and then strangled Sherrice in a women's bathroom stall at the Nevada casino.

The case drew national attention by focusing on the safety of children in casinos and on the revelation that Strohmeier's friend, David Cash Jr., said he saw the crime in progress but did not stop it.

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