Home Healthcare Fatality File

Autistic Tarrytown man beaten to death by home healthcare worker, family says

TERRYTOWN, La. (WVUE) – The family of an autistic Terrytown man who died last Tuesday (May 13) says his death was not an accident.

“From what we understand, he was beaten to death by his nighttime care giver,” ReAnne’ Knickrehm said.

After Rohn Jaeson Brinker’s death, deputies arrested and booked his caregiver, Terrell Nix with second-degree murder.

They also arrested Nix’s mother, Denise, and booked her with obstruction of justice. Denise Nix was re-arrested Friday on manslaughter charges, court records show.

“We’re beating ourselves up is the nice way of saying it. Sleep is a problem. We can’t function,” Knickrehm said.

She and her sister Robin Bordelon said Brinker, an autistic man, lived in a Terrytown apartment and had the mind of a child. Because of that, they said the company Accessibility Community Living Inc. provided Brinker with the assisted living he needed.

“He had to have someone around the clock, “ Bordelon said.

According to the police report, Denise Nix – who the victims’ family says runs the healthcare company – called 911 around 2 a.m. Wednesday. When a deputy arrived, Brinker was barely breathing, the report states.

Terrell Nix, 34, told deputies he worked for the company and found Brinker naked, lying face-down in the tub after he heard a loud thump come from the bathroom. Nix then told investigators he called his mother Denise to the scene, who called 911.

Brinker’s sisters said Denise Nix called them around 4 that morning.

“She was trying to convince us for hours that he fell in the bathtub, and that’s what caused him to pass away,” Bordelon said. “That’s what she was trying to convince us of.”

The police report states Brinker had multiple bruises to the face, right arm and chest. After his autopsy, the Jefferson Parish Coroner’s office ruled Brinker’s death a homicide. Additionally, police said they found trace amounts of blood where they believe attempts were made to remove it.

“I think there’s a lot more in this investigation that will be uncovered,” Knickrehm said.

Because Terrell and Denise Nix were involved in the home healthcare industry, investigators said there may be other incidents of abuse that haven’t been reported. Brinker’s sisters said they just want to know why this happened to their brother.

“I want answers,” Knickerehm said. I am searching everything. I want to know what happened here and how we failed our brother. It’s driving us crazy.”

The Louisiana Department of Health said they are also investigating the healthcare company and said they are in the process of terminating all medicaid payments to them.