



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Sue Lindsay
Public Information
303-835-5639

Man Convicted of Vehicular Assault in Crash that Left 7-year-old Girl Paralyzed

David Jesse James Alva was convicted Wednesday of vehicular assault DUI and first-degree assault with extreme indifference in a high speed crash that left a 7-year-old girl paralyzed and seriously injured her mother.

Alva (DOB 12/02/92) was fleeing from police in a stolen car driving at speeds of up to 80 miles per hour with his lights off at about 7:30 p.m. on February 6 when he sped through a stop sign at 68th Avenue and Pecos Street, plowing into a car driven by Sandra Acuna-Mendoza, 40. She was heading home from a funeral with her daughter, Jamile Hernandez, in the back seat when they were broadsided by Alva's speeding Nissan Xterra.

Jamile Hernandez was hospitalized for three months and left paralyzed. Acuna-Mendoza suffered a broken pelvis and ribs, a fractured spine and lacerated liver and spleen.

"Jamile Hernandez was a perfectly healthy 7-year-old second-grader who loved swimming and wanted to play softball," Chief Deputy District Attorney Patrick Costigan told the jury in closing arguments Wednesday afternoon. "David Alva changed her life forever."

Deputy District Attorney Leivy Johnson said Alva had been smoking methamphetamine and marijuana all day before fleeing from police in the stolen car, knowing there was a warrant for his arrest. He tried to run away from the crash scene with a broken leg. Tests showed that Alva had 622 nanograms of methamphetamine and 3.5 ng of THC in his system at the time of the crash.

"He was out of his mind on meth and paranoid," Costigan said. "He was driving a stolen car and he was going to avoid capture at all costs. He didn't care about anyone but himself. His selfish actions cost Jamile Hernandez the use of her legs."

The Adams County District Court jury deliberated about an hour before convicting Alva on two counts of aggravated motor vehicle theft (F3), four counts of vehicular assault (F4) and two counts of first-degree assault with extreme indifference and grave risk of death (F3).

Sentencing will be at 1:30 December 1 in Division G of Adams County District Court.

District Attorney Dave Young thanked the jury for their service and verdict. "I hope this case serves as a warning to everyone about the tragic results that driving under the influence of drugs and speeding can have," he said.