

Woman enters first-degree murder plea to October 2012 death of infant son

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EDWARDSVILLE — A **St. Louis** woman pleaded guilty yesterday in the October 2012 death of her infant son in **Alton, Illinois**.

Wallisha S. Bland (03/10/1993), pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree murder. The defendant was set for trial on Tuesday, Jan. 4.

Police in Alton were dispatched to an apartment at **3210 Belle Street in Alton** on October 4, 2012, after a 911 call at 8:28 a.m. **Jace R. Gillespie** (d.o.b. 8/7/12) was

unresponsive and taken to Saint Anthony's Hospital in Alton where he was pronounced dead at 10:02 a.m. Following an investigation by Alton detectives and the results of the autopsy, his mother, Bland, was charged with First Degree Murder.

At the time of Jace's death, no immediate cause of death had been determined. However, the autopsy conducted by the **Madison County Coroner's Office** showed that Jace died from a skull fracture. Following an investigation by the **Alton Police Department**, it was determined that on the previous evening, Bland threw her infant son down on the floor which caused the skull fracture that he died from the next day.

Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe, Chief of the Violent Crimes Unit, will be seeking a sentence of 40 years in prison; maximum penalty range for Murder is 20-60 years in prison. Bland will be required to serve 100 percent of her sentence. Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons thanked Assistant State's Attorney Uhe, Assistant State's Attorney Crowe, the Alton Police Department and the Madison County Coroner's Office for their work in securing Bland's conviction.

Circuit Judge Kyle Napp accepted Bland's plea. Bland will remain in custody at the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville pending sentencing, which will be scheduled following the completion of a Pre-Sentencing Investigation.