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Arundel teen accused of trying to kill her baby is sent to sister's home

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The teen-ager charged with trying to kill her newborn baby by throwing her from a third-floor window was released from jail on her own recognizance yesterday to reside with her sister while she awaits trial.

Anne Arundel County District Judge Martha Rasin ordered Michelle Elizabeth Savage, 17, to stay at her sister's Meade Village townhouse rather than return to their mother's apartment around the corner, because the apartment has no telephone.

Ms. Savage, charged as an adult with attempted first-degree murder and child abuse, is not to leave the residence in the 1800 block of Meade Village Circle except for school and visits to her lawyer and doctors.

The judge did not specifically rule that Ms. Savage cannot see her daughter, who is listed in stable condition at Anne Arundel Medical Center with several skull fractures and other injuries from her 18-foot fall Saturday afternoon.

The judge also ordered a psychiatric evaluation.

"I think that definitely needs to be done," said Evelyn O. A. Darden, Ms. Savage's lawyer.

Daryl D. Jones, assistant state's attorney, disagreed. The county Detention Center had conducted a psychological examination and said Ms. Savage "is fine," he said.

Ms. Darden told the judge that Ms. Savage, the youngest of seven children, is a "shy, quiet child, very withdrawn" and that she "has the mental capacity and personality" of someone younger than 17.

Ms. Darden also said her client is a solid student who was learning computer keyboarding and that she would try to continue her schooling, perhaps at night or at home while the case is pending.

Police were called to Meade Village, a low-income housing project, about 3:15 p.m. Saturday by three children who said they had found a crying, naked infant, with the umbilical cord still attached, lying on a storm grate.

Police said the 6-pound, 4-ounce baby, no more than a few hours old, had been thrown from the third-floor window of the apartment that Ms. Savage shared with her mother and other

relatives.

Investigators and prosecutors said they believe Ms. Savage gave birth by herself in the bathtub.

Neighbors and friends said that even Ms. Savage's family did not know she was pregnant.

The teen-ager is an 11th-grader at Meade Senior High School, the only public school in the county with a comprehensive program of classes, advice and support for pregnant teen-agers, including a day care center, said Sue O'Connell, the school system's teacher specialist for parent-related courses.

"I feel badly that she didn't say anything," Ms. O'Connell said.

"She must have been really scared."

There are 13 students in the prenatal classes and 16 in the parenting classes. Students need parental permission to take the course. Ms. Savage took a child development class last year, but it was not part of the program for teen-age parents.

Yesterday, the first school day after a long holiday weekend, Meade High and nearby McArthur Middle School were abuzz with talk about Ms. Savage.

Most of it echoed what people in the community have been saying.

Mrs. O'Connell said that in her classes new parents "thought it was terrible -- you just don't throw your kid out the window" and that "the girls were astounded that she had her baby at home alone."

"She probably felt that there was no one she could turn to," said Dr. Rosetta Stith, director of the Lawrence G. Paquin School in Baltimore, whose 300 students are pregnant or are new parents.

"It was obvious that during that whole nine months there was no one with whom she could confide," Dr. Stith said.

"Anyone who does a heinous act like this is saying, 'I need some help.'"