



## Transylvania County Sheriff's Office

### Press Release

### Sheriff Chuck Owenby

**Subject:** Death Investigation of 12-year-old minor

**Incident location:** Trails Carolina Camp  
500 Winding Gap Rd  
Lake Toxaway, N.C. 28747

**Service Date:** February 3, 2024 Saturday

**Agencies Involved:** Transylvania County Sheriff's Office, Transylvania County Department of Social Services-Child Protection Services, Lake Toxaway Fire & Rescue, Transylvania County EMS, NC Medical Examiner's Office.

#### **Statement:**

On 02/02/2024 Friday, a 12-year-old male was transported per parents by two men from New York to Trails Carolina Camp at 500 Winding Gap Rd, Lake Toxaway, N.C. The Department of Health and Human Services license the Trails Carolina Camp as a therapeutic camp. After intake, the 12 year old was assigned to a cabin for lodging with other minors. There were 4 adult staff members from Trails Carolina Camp also assigned to the cabin.

At 8:10am on 02/03/2024 Saturday a call was made to the 911 Center in reference to the 12-year-old male not breathing. Fire/Rescue personnel were dispatched along with deputies. According to camp staff, CPR efforts were made and a CPR mask was found at the scene. Upon arrival, rescue efforts were initiated and then stopped as the child appeared to be deceased for some time. Deputies on scene requested investigative staff who arrived shortly after 9:00am to process the scene and collect evidence. The local Medical Examiner responded to the scene as well and the 12-year-old was transported to the local hospital for a preliminary examination by the medical examiner.

The child was sent for autopsy to Winston Salem as his death appeared suspicious since he had arrived at the camp less than 24 hours prior to his death. An autopsy was conducted on 02/06/2024 and the forensic pathologist conducting it stated to investigators that death appeared to not be natural but the manner and cause of death is still pending.



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On 02/06/2024 Tuesday investigators applied for and were granted 2 search warrants for 2 separate locations of Trails Carolina Camp located in Transylvania County which were served and executed simultaneously. One location was at the base camp on 500 Winding Gap Rd, Lake Toxaway, N.C. 28747, where the incident occurred. The second was at 618 Sundance Lake Rd, Pisgah Forest, N.C. 28768. The reason for the second location at 618 Sundance Lake Rd was that Trails Carolina Camp had moved the other juvenile campers from the cabin where the incident occurred to that location. Trails Carolina Camp has not completely cooperated with the investigation.

The staff members who were assigned to the cabin where the incident occurred were reportedly placed on leave according to Trails Carolina Camp.

The investigation is continuing and the report generated by the N.C Office of the Chief Medical Examiner may not be available for several months.

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