

# Police look for mom, son who fled to avoid chemo

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FILE -- In a May 7, 2009 file photo Colleen Hauser, right, comforts her 13-year-old son Daniel during a press conference in New Ulm, Minn. (AP Photo/Mankato Free Press, Dan Linehan)

(AP) -- A courtroom clash between medicine and faith took a criminal turn, with police around the country on the lookout Wednesday for a Minnesota mother who fled with her cancer-stricken 13-year-old son rather than consent to chemotherapy.

A court-ordered X-ray on Monday showed a tumor growing in Daniel Hauser's chest, and doctors said it will probably kill him without conventional medical treatment.

Before she took off, Colleen Hauser told a judge that she wished to treat her son's cancer with natural healing methods advocated by an American Indian religious group known as the Nemenhah Band. But even that group's founder said Hauser made a mistake by running from the law.

Authorities in Minnesota said they were following a number of leads on the whereabouts of mother and son, but gave no details.

"I just wish we could get to Colleen and tell her to come in. This is not going to go away. It's a court order," Brown County Sheriff Rich Hoffmann said. He said Hauser's husband was cooperating with investigators.

Daniel has Hodgkins [lymphoma](#), a highly curable form of cancer when treated with [chemo](#) and radiation. But the teen and his parents rejected chemo after a single treatment, with the boy's mother saying that putting toxic substances in the body violates the family's religious convictions.

Colleen Hauser said she had been treating the boy's cancer instead with herbal supplements, vitamins, ionized water and other natural alternatives - a regimen based mostly on information she found on the Internet.

The Hauser family had been ordered to appear before a judge Tuesday for a hearing to consider chemo. But mother and son failed to show, and a warrant was issued for the mother's arrest.

Daniel's father, Anthony Hauser, said in an interview Wednesday at the family's farm near Sleepy Eye, a town of 3,500 people about 80 miles from Minneapolis, that his wife and son left without telling him their plans, and that he hadn't heard from them.

He said he hopes his wife is either getting their son treatment for his

illness or will bring him home. "If he's being cared for, and it's going to help him, I think it's going to be a good thing," Anthony Hauser said.

James Olson, the attorney representing social service authorities in Minnesota, originally asked the judge to cite the father for contempt of court, but later backed off and said he believed Hauser didn't know the whereabouts of his wife and son.

An alert issued to police departments around the country said mother and son might be traveling with a California lawyer named Susan Daya. The alert said they might also be with a Massachusetts man named Billy Best, who as a teenager in 1994 ran away from home to escape chemotherapy for cancer similar to Daniel's. Best, who says he was cured by natural remedies, had appeared at a news conference in Minnesota recently to support the Hausers. Daya and Best did not immediately return telephone messages Wednesday.

The Nemenhah Band, based in Weaubleau, Mo., advocates healing methods tied to American Indian practices. The Hausers are not American Indian.

Phillip Cloudpiller Landis founded Nemenhah about a decade ago and calls himself its principal medicine chief. He said it was prompted by his own bout with cancer, which he claims to have cured through diet, visits to a sweat lodge and other natural remedies.

Landis served several months in prison in Idaho for fraud tied to the sale of natural remedies. Nemenhah members are asked to pay \$250 to join and a monthly \$100 fee.

On Tuesday, Landis said Hauser should not have run, adding: "You don't solve anything by disregarding the order of the judge."

There have been at least five instances in the U.S. in recent years in which parents fled with a sick child to avoid medical treatments.

They include the celebrated case of Parker Jensen, who was 12 when his family fled from Utah to Idaho in 2003 to avoid court-ordered chemo after doctors removed a small cancerous tumor under his tongue. Daren and Barbara Jensen pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor in a deal that brought no jail time or fines, and went on to lobby for legislation to strengthen the rights of parents. Parker survived without [chemotherapy](#).

In Minnesota, District Judge John Rodenberg ruled last week that the Hausers were neglecting their son, and ordered them to consult doctors. He cited a state law requiring parents to provide necessary medical care for a child.

Most states have similar laws. A few have exemptions allowing parents to refuse treatment on religious grounds, and Minnesota was one of them. But Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, said he helped push a bill through the Legislature to remove it two decades ago. He said the impetus was a case involving Christian Scientist parents who refused insulin for a diabetic child in the mid-1980s.

Caplan, one of the nation's foremost medical ethicists, said religious exceptions are bad public policy because effective medical treatment for a child shouldn't be sacrificed for a parent's beliefs.

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Condon reported from Minneapolis. Associated Press Writer Steve Karnowski also contributed to this report from Minneapolis.

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