
Del Norte Revisits the Death of a Klamath Child

By Linda Sutter August 6, 2026

DEL NORTE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT — Nearly ten years after the death of a young boy in Klamath, a case that once appeared to have reached a dead end has returned to the courtroom Thursday as Del Norte Superior Court considered whether proceedings should be suspended for a competency evaluation.

The case, *People of Del Norte v. Feliz*, is being heard before the Honorable Judge Darren McElfresh. District Attorney Katherine Micks appeared on behalf of the People, while attorney James Fallman represented the defendant.

The tragedy dates back nearly a decade to a day when two children went out to play. Only one returned home. The other child, Dante, was later found deceased. The alleged crime occurred in Klamath when the defendant, now 27 years old, was 16 years of age.

The case was previously dismissed under former Del Norte County District Attorney Dale Trigg, after prosecutors concluded there was insufficient evidence at that time to proceed.

The matter has since been revisited by the Del Norte County District Attorney's Office under District Attorney Katherine Micks, who has determined that sufficient evidence now exists to pursue criminal charges.

The prosecution is seeking to have the matter transferred from the juvenile justice system to adult court, where the defendant could face prosecution as an adult despite being a juvenile at the time of the alleged offense.

Thursday's hearing focused on the defense's request to suspend criminal proceedings pursuant to California Penal Code section 1368, which governs questions regarding a defendant's mental competency to stand trial.

Defense attorney James Fallman requested that the court authorize approximately \$4,000 in public funds for a psychological evaluation, asserting concerns that his client may not be competent to proceed.

Judge McElfresh questioned whether sufficient evidence had been presented to justify the expenditure of taxpayer funds and the suspension of criminal proceedings.

During the hearing, the defense acknowledged that the defendant had been unwilling to communicate with counsel and had not followed legal advice.

The Judge noted that the defendant had previously been incarcerated within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Defense Attorney Fallman expressed concern that an unidentified substance or prior drug use could be affecting his client's mental state.

Judge McElfresh, however, found those assertions insufficient to establish substantial evidence of legal incompetence. The court noted that a defendant's refusal to communicate with counsel, standing alone, does not automatically demonstrate incompetency under California law.

Finding the record inadequate to suspend proceedings, Judge McElfresh declined to order a competency evaluation at this time and instead directed that updated reports be prepared by the Del Norte County Probation Department.

Those reports, expected to take approximately four to six weeks, will assist the court in determining whether the case should be transferred to adult court.

The matter was continued to September 17, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., when the court is expected to review the probation reports and consider the prosecution's motion to transfer the case to adult court.

For Dante's family, Thursday's hearing represents another chapter in a decade-long pursuit of justice.

While the allegations against the defendant have yet to be tested at trial, the proceedings underscored the complexity of prosecuting serious crimes many years after they are alleged to have occurred.

The court's eventual decision regarding whether the case will proceed in adult court will determine the next phase of a case that has remained unresolved for nearly ten years.