



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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Press Release – Sentence Imposed in Manslaughter by Fentanyl

On March 19, 2020, police responded to a home in Lafayette after a man woke up to his girlfriend not breathing and not responding; the victim was later pronounced dead. The victim's boyfriend told police he had bought what he believed to be oxycodone pills from Sammy Valdez. The victim, his girlfriend, took one pill before going to bed and died as a result of the defendant's actions and deceit.

The Boulder County Drug Task Force launched an extensive investigation. Mr. Valdez was arrested by the Drug Task Force. The District Attorney's Office filed charges against the defendant, including Manslaughter. Following a weeklong jury trial, Mr. Valdez was found guilty of every charge, including Manslaughter (F4), Distribution of a Controlled Substance – Fentanyl (DF3), three counts of Distribution of a Controlled Substance – Cocaine (DF3) and Possession with Intent to Distribute - Cocaine (DF3).

Under the law at the time the defendant caused the victim's tragic death, the maximum sentence that the Court can impose is six (6) years in state prison for Manslaughter. As Chief Deputy DA Adam Kendall explained to the Court, based on the fentanyl law enacted in 2022, the defendant could have faced a longer sentence in state prison if he caused this death today. As a result, the prosecution strongly argued that the maximum sentence of six (6) years be imposed for the Manslaughter count plus prison sentences for other charges, for a total of ten (10) years in state prison. The judge imposed a sentence of five (5) years on the Manslaughter count and concurrent sentences of two (2) years on the other counts.

District Attorney Michael Dougherty stated, "Given the tragic death of this victim and this defendant's actions, this defendant deserves to be in state prison. In today's sentencing hearing, the victim's family shared their unimaginable loss and grief with the judge; it is a heartbreaking case. Our team was honored to fight for justice for the victim and her loving family. Fentanyl dealers, such as this defendant, seeking to profit from dealing deadly drugs must be held fully accountable."