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PRESS RELEASE

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Oroville Woman Sentenced on Hit-and-Run which Seriously Injured 5-Year-Old

In an emotional court sentencing hearing today, the family of a severely injured five-year-old boy demanded justice in the case of **Banessa Santana, 34, of Oroville**, for her reckless flight from police that ended with her car running into the back of the car carrying the boy.

Santana was sentenced this afternoon in Butte County Superior Court on multiple cases relating to a series of incidents where Santana absconded from law enforcement. She was sentenced to the upper term for the hit-and-run charge that injured the boy, plus other charges, for a total term of 11 years and 8 months in state prison.

The injured boy's mother, Joy Hamilton, provided a statement to the court stating the entire family has lost their sense of security in the world since the crime was committed:

“While our son lay dying on the side of the road, a bystander desperately trying to save him by giving him CPR, [Santana] hopped out of her car and ran off. Then as the weeks went by she roamed free while [our 5-year-old son] lay in a hospital bed imprisoned in a body that would not work and a mind that could not function.”

Continuing, Hamilton noted:

“The trauma that our little boy and our whole family have experienced as a result of this crime can never be taken away. [Our son] will never be the same little carefree boy that he was. The pain and suffering that he has endured will always be a part of his story... So far [he] is the one who has paid the price for the crimes the defendant committed. Now it is her turn to pay.”

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the series of cases leading to the tragic end began on May 20, 2021, when Santana had been sentenced to serve 180 days in the Butte County Jail based on a violation of probation for not completing the hours owed by Santana in the Sheriff's Alternative Work Program (SWAP).

On May 26, 2021, Santana was placed on the Alternative Custody (Home) Supervision program by the Butte County Jail and was released from the jail on an electronic ankle monitor. Immediately after her release, Santana walked to the nearby gas station, bought a pair of scissors, and cut off the ankle monitor. Santana dumped the monitor in a trash can and walked away. This event was captured on video surveillance. An arrest warrant was issued and Santana was

charged with Escape. This was the third violation of Santana's probation based on her failure to complete the required jail time.

Santana was still on escape status from the jail, when on March 12, 2022 she was spotted by an Oroville Police Department officer who was aware of outstanding warrants for Santana's arrest. The officer turned on his red lights and siren, but instead of stopping, Santana took the officer on a high-speed chase through a residential area of Thermalito, running stop signs and traveling in excess of 50-60 mph. The officer had started to slow down after three miles, as the chase had become too dangerous, and Santana had gone over a hill approximately a quarter mile away.

Ramsey said Santana then collided into the rear of the vehicle being driven by a father and his two children, ages eight and five. The father and children were taken to the hospital for treatment. The five-year-old boy suffered major injuries and spent several weeks in the hospital because of the collision. The child will have permanent injuries.

Ramsey said Santana fled from her damaged vehicle on foot and remained at large until April 21, 2022, when she was spotted as a passenger in a vehicle by Gridley Police Department. When the car was pulled over by Gridley police, Santana jumped out of the passenger seat of the vehicle and led officers on a foot chase, but was quickly chased down and arrested.

In court today, Santana apologized to the family for her actions. The judge also ordered Santana to pay restitution to the family for the hospital and continuing care expenses for the boy which is estimated currently to be more than \$200,000.



Banessa Santana