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Local teacher's abortion death under investigation in Maryland

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 Mourners on Monday evening Feb. 11, 2013 wait outside the Coxe and Graziano Funeral Home on E. Boston Post Road in Mamaroneck to pay their respects to Jennifer Morbelli.

Mourners on Monday evening Feb. 11, 2013 wait outside the Coxe and Graziano Funeral Home on E. Boston Post Road in Mamaroneck to pay their respects to Jennifer Morbelli. / James O'Rourke/The Journal News

Written by
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SHAWN COHEN**

Authorities in Maryland said Monday that they are investigating the death of a 29-year-old New Rochelle woman who reportedly traveled to the Washington, D.C., suburbs for a late-term abortion.

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Jennifer Morbelli, a full-time substitute teacher at the Church Street School in White Plains, died Thursday at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, prompting an investigation by the Montgomery County medical examiner, a probe that has also involved the Montgomery County Police Department.

According to an Associated Press report, Morbelli went to the Rockville, Md., hospital after being treated at Germantown Reproductive Health Services, a separate clinic.

 Jennifer McKenna Morbelli, 29, who died this past weekend in Maryland

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The story has sparked a fierce online debate among abortion opponents. Kathy Morbelli, the dead woman's mother-in-law, told The Journal News that she is extremely upset with the rhetoric swirling around the death of Morbelli and her unborn daughter, who was to be known as Madison Leigh.

"They know she was a wanted baby, they know she was named," she said. "I just wish that the people could let my son, who is only 29 years old, mourn in peace.... We have no comment on the doctor."

"Jennifer meant everything to this family," Morbelli added. "We've lost a wonderful person and we've lost our granddaughter."

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Investigators in Maryland said that, while the probe into Jennifer Morbelli's death is ongoing, there is currently no indication of criminal activity.

"I can confirm that, yes, there is a death investigation being coordinated by the Medical Examiner's Office and the Montgomery Police Department has been notified," said Lucille Baur, a spokeswoman for the police department.

Bruce Goldfarb, a spokesman for the medical examiner, said the office was "investigating the cause and manner of death" of Morbelli, but would not provide details.

"This is a routine death investigation," he said. "Anytime somebody dies during a medical procedure it's referred to this office. So it's a routine matter. There is no timetable. Things happen when they happen."

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The Associated Press and staff writer James O'Rourke contributed to this report.

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