

# Grand Island woman indicted in death of 2-year-old girl

By [Aaron Besecker](#) | Published November 7, 2018 | Updated November 7, 2018

A Grand Island woman has been indicted by an Erie County grand jury on second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter charges in the death of her boyfriend's 2-year-old daughter.

Brianna Valenti, 26, pleaded not guilty Wednesday during her arraignment in county court. She remained in custody on \$150,000 bail.

Raelynn Rose Fuller died Sept. 22 in Oishei Children's Hospital after her family decided to take her off of life support.

Prosecutors said Valenti was the child's caretaker from 6 a.m. Sept. 10 until she called 911 at about 4 p.m. that day saying the child was unresponsive.

Cody Fuller, the child's father, was not home during that period, prosecutors said. Valenti was living with Fuller in an apartment on West Park Road on Grand Island.

Detectives with the Sheriff's Office were called to the hospital at about 10:30 p.m. Sept. 10 after Erie County Child Protective Services found what they suspected to be signs of child abuse. Raelynn was in the hospital's intensive care unit at the time, had suffered brain damage and other injuries and was in a vegetative state, according to prosecutors.

"This is a case of shaken baby syndrome," county District Attorney John J. Flynn said Wednesday.

Doctors told investigators Valenti provided "some explanation" about the child's injuries but what she said was "not consistent" with the level of injuries observed at the hospital, Assistant District Attorney John P. Feroletto told Judge Sheila A. DiTullio.

Defense attorney Robert Cutting disputed that Raelynn suffered from shaken baby syndrome and said the child may have suffered a medical event that led to her injuries.

"There is absolutely nothing that she has told us that would indicate that she in any way fashion or form did anything that would deliberately harm that child," Cutting told reporters after Valenti's arraignment.

Prosecutors may be relying on what Cutting described as "antiquated" medical standards in making their conclusion in this case based on the existence of certain injuries, he said.

Valenti has been in custody since her arrest on Sept. 11, according to Sheriff's Office records. Valenti was initially charged with two counts of felony assault as well as one count of child endangerment.

Valenti's mother attended her daughter's court appearance on Wednesday and told a reporter her daughter did not harm Raelynn.

"She was the only functional parent this child ever had on the planet and she loved that child as if it were her own," said Cutting, the defense attorney.

A hearing to review statements made by Valenti to investigators has been scheduled for Dec. 21.

Flynn said Valenti was indicted on the manslaughter charge in addition to the murder charge in case prosecutors have difficulty reaching the standard of proof for "depraved indifference" murder.

Cutting said that his client, at this point, wants to take the case to trial because she feels she is being accused of something she didn't do.