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Police Continue Hunt for Missing Gun in Kentucky Teen's Murder

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Authorities in Elsmere, Kentucky, are intensifying their efforts to locate the firearm used in the tragic killing of 15-year-old Tristan Smith, who was fatally shot inside a home on July 21. Despite arresting another teenager in connection with her death, the handgun believed to have been used remains missing, sparking concern among both law enforcement and the community.

The shooting occurred at a residence on Autumn Road and, according to officials, took place inside the suspect's bedroom. Rob Sanders, the Commonwealth's Attorney for Kenton

County, emphasized the disturbing nature of a teenager gaining access to a deadly weapon. "It's very disturbing that a 15-year-old had access to a gun, much less had a gun," Sanders said.

Police have been unable to recover the firearm, even after combing the surrounding neighborhood and wooded areas in the days following the incident. Elsmere officers launched an extensive search operation, checking yards and nearby landscapes in hopes of finding the weapon. Yet, so far, those efforts have yielded no results.

"I know that Elsmere police did an exhaustive search in the neighborhood, in the yards, in the woods that were anywhere near the house where the shooting took place," Sanders said. "I don't know that the gun was ever really there in the first place. I suspect the gun has either been hidden or given to someone else for the purposes of hiding the gun on behalf of the suspect."

Authorities now believe someone else may be in possession of the firearm or may have helped the suspect conceal it. Police are urging anyone who may have come into contact with the teen after the shooting to come forward. Sanders revealed that the suspect has not provided a clear timeline of his actions after the crime, including who he may have seen or where he went. He also reportedly used a blocked number to call his mother shortly after the shooting, further complicating the investigation.

"I also believe there's probably somebody out there, maybe multiple people out there, that had contact with this 15-year-old and they know what he did with the handgun," Sanders said.

The appeal for information comes with a warning. Sanders made it clear that anyone found to be hiding the weapon or assisting the suspect in avoiding justice could face criminal charges. He urged those who may know something to help both law enforcement and themselves by contacting the Elsmere police as soon as possible.

"So, anybody that might have additional information can help themselves out, help themselves avoid criminal charges if they'd contact Elsmere police right away and turn that gun in," Sanders added.

This case has shaken the local community, not only due to the age of the victim and suspect but also due to the broader concerns about access to firearms by minors. While the

investigation continues, authorities are also pursuing the legal process to try the 15-year-old suspect as an adult. Sanders confirmed that both his office and the county attorney's office have filed a request for transfer, which would allow the teen to be prosecuted in adult court.

The Elsmere Police Department urges anyone with information about the location of the weapon or the suspect's actions following the shooting to contact them at 859-356-3191.