

emper flare between family members in courtroom

Burger's mother, Nicky Ornato, and her other sister, Jadya Pascale, described Burger as "mentally unstable," a woman who has shown no remorse and began a downward spiral after the incident, alienating family and engaging in self-destructive behavior.

In the increasingly contentious proceedings, during which Burger's family members and the friends who came to support her exchanged pointed glares, three women spoke on Burger's behalf — a friend, Mary Carra, called the family "derisive, mean-spirited, over-reactors" who grossly mischaracterized Burger.

neighbor, wept as she told the court about how Burger helped her family when Dougherty's son broke his arm.

Burger's family members said they were disappointed by the decision, and felt the judge relied too heavily on the lack of substantial injuries to their son. The judge should have

considered further the inconsistencies in Burger's statements to police, and the odor of chemicals they smelled after she was outside with the boy, they said.

Now, family members hope the court-mandated psychological evaluation yields results that lead to treatment, they said. They have never advocated jail time, just psychological treatment for Burger, her sister said.

Liz Dougherty, a friend and

Ornato told the court. "She is

evil, mean, vindictive and she needs help."

Knighi suggested the family was interested in persecuting Burger because they had taken her husband's side in ongoing divorce proceedings.

David J. Strollo, supervisory

assistant's state's attorney and the prosecutor in the case, said the state had a "strong circumstantial case" against Burger, but Richards ruled the evidence supported accelerated rehabilitation.

Burger's family members

rehabilitation.

Baby:]

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nism of the baby's exposure.

The boy has since recovered. Burger deferred all comment after the hearing to her lawyer.

Knight described Burger as "soccer mom" who was wrongfully prosecuted after her 10-day-old nephew, whom she was holding, began struggling to breathe, throwing up and exuding a chemical smell in September 2006.

Toxicology tests found the bait came in contact with the same kind of pesticide Burger bought the morning of the incident.

The arrest warrant indicates that Burger never handed over the pesticide that was determined to have caused the symptoms. It also said she admitted suffering from depression and obsessive compulsive disorder. The warrant further implies she may have harmed the baby because she was jealous of the attention her mother lavished on her sister's newborn son. Previously, Burger was the only family member to have a boy.

Knight said Burger does not suffer from any mental illness.

"This case should never have furnished any business for the criminal courts," Knight said. "It was a pure, unadulterated accident, and the whole motive she was jealous that her sister had a baby was preposterous."

Burger's two sisters, brother-in-law and mother painted a different picture during Wednesday's 90-minute court hearing.

The New Haven Register withheld the names of the baby's parents in order to protect the boy's identity.

The baby's mother and father who live in Madison, both said they believe Burger intentionally poisoned their son.

The boy's father said he only detected the chemical smell when Burger, who had been holding the baby outside at home, came back in the house.

"The chemical odor on the outfit was so strong that it was obvious to me that this was an accident. ... I believe she had a mental breakdown, took my son outside and intentionally introduced a small quantity of pesticide into his mouth," he said.

The boy's parents, as well as