

## Family of Sebastopol 16-year-old killed by deputies files suit

Henry K. Lee, Chronicle Staff Writer  
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The family of a 16-year-old boy shot and killed in his Sebastopol home by Sonoma County sheriff's deputies has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the county.

The lawsuit said Jeremiah Chass was in acute medical distress and in need of medical assistance when his family called for help March 12, but instead was shot eight times.

Jeremiah, a junior at Analy High School, did not pose a threat to Deputies John Misita and Jim Ryan and had no criminal history or record of violent behavior, said the lawsuit filed Monday in U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

"The family called for an ambulance, and instead of an ambulance, they got law enforcement, and when law enforcement arrived, soon thereafter their son was dead," said Andrew Schwartz, a Walnut Creek attorney representing the boy's parents, Mark and Yvette Chass, and younger brother Isaiah.

The lawsuit, which seeks unspecified damages, names the county, Sheriff Bill Cogbill, Misita and Ryan. It accuses the Sheriff's Department of failing to train its deputies adequately in dealing with people displaying symptoms of mental illness.

Steve Mitchell, a Santa Rosa attorney representing the county, said Tuesday that the deputies were respected and experienced and "deserve to have their names cleared."

"The outcome of this very dangerous and life-threatening incident was tragic and stressful for all involved, certainly including the Chass family, as well as the deputies and their families," Mitchell said. "They put their lives at risk in this incident, and their efforts likely saved the life of Jeremiah's younger brother."

Santa Rosa police, who investigated the shooting, have said Jeremiah was wielding a knife when deputies arrived at his home on the 1400 block of High School Road. Jeremiah continued to wave the knife threateningly after deputies tried to grab it and pepper-sprayed the youth, authorities said.

Jeremiah's slaying was the third over the past year in which Sonoma County law enforcement authorities shot and killed people with mental problems.

On Jan. 2, Santa Rosa police shot mental patient Jesse Nathaniel Hamilton, 24, after he threatened them with a large kitchen knife and ignored their warnings to stop, authorities said.

On April 9, Santa Rosa police shot and killed Richard Desantis, a 30-year-old ironworker with a bipolar



disorder, after he allegedly charged at them.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/01/09/BALHUBCOU.DTL>

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