

# Chrysler to pay Marietta family

## Toddler's death sparked lawsuit

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ATLANTA — Detroit-based auto giant Chrysler Motor Corp. and a Cobb family have agreed to settle a lawsuit for an undisclosed payment 13 months after a minivan the company manufactured crushed a toddler in his driveway.

The family of 17-month-old Ian Escobar filed a lawsuit in Fulton County Superior Court against Chrysler after the boy died on June 6, 2006, when a 1995 Dodge Caravan rolled over him in the driveway of their home at 1955 Hamilton Place off Powers Ferry Road in Marietta.

The boy's babysitter reportedly turned away from him when Ian ran from the house to the driveway.

According to Cobb police, Ian's 2-year-old brother had climbed into the driver's seat of the parked van and released the parking brake. Ian's parents were at the home during the incident.

The family's attorney, Jeffrey Harris of Atlanta-based Fryer Law Firm, argued that the toddler's death could have been avoided had the minivan been equipped with a relatively common device to prevent it from shifting out of park without the brake pedal depressed.

He said the shift interlock part, which costs about \$9, is not included in Chrysler and Dodge minivans built before 2001.

Harris previously won a \$3.4 million lawsuit against Chrysler in May 2006 over the 2002 rollover death of 3-year-old Madison Hamby in Cumming.

Chrysler spokesman Michael Palese told an Atlanta newspaper on Wednesday that parents are the ones responsible when they leave their children in a vehicle with the keys in the ignition.

"A settlement is not an admission of a defect. The only defect is the judgment of leaving children in a car with the keys inside. We make good cars," he told the paper.

According to Kansas-based safety advocacy group Kids and Cars, the auto industry as a whole voluntarily began installing shift interlocks in cars in 1992. The part is standard equipment on new model vehicles.