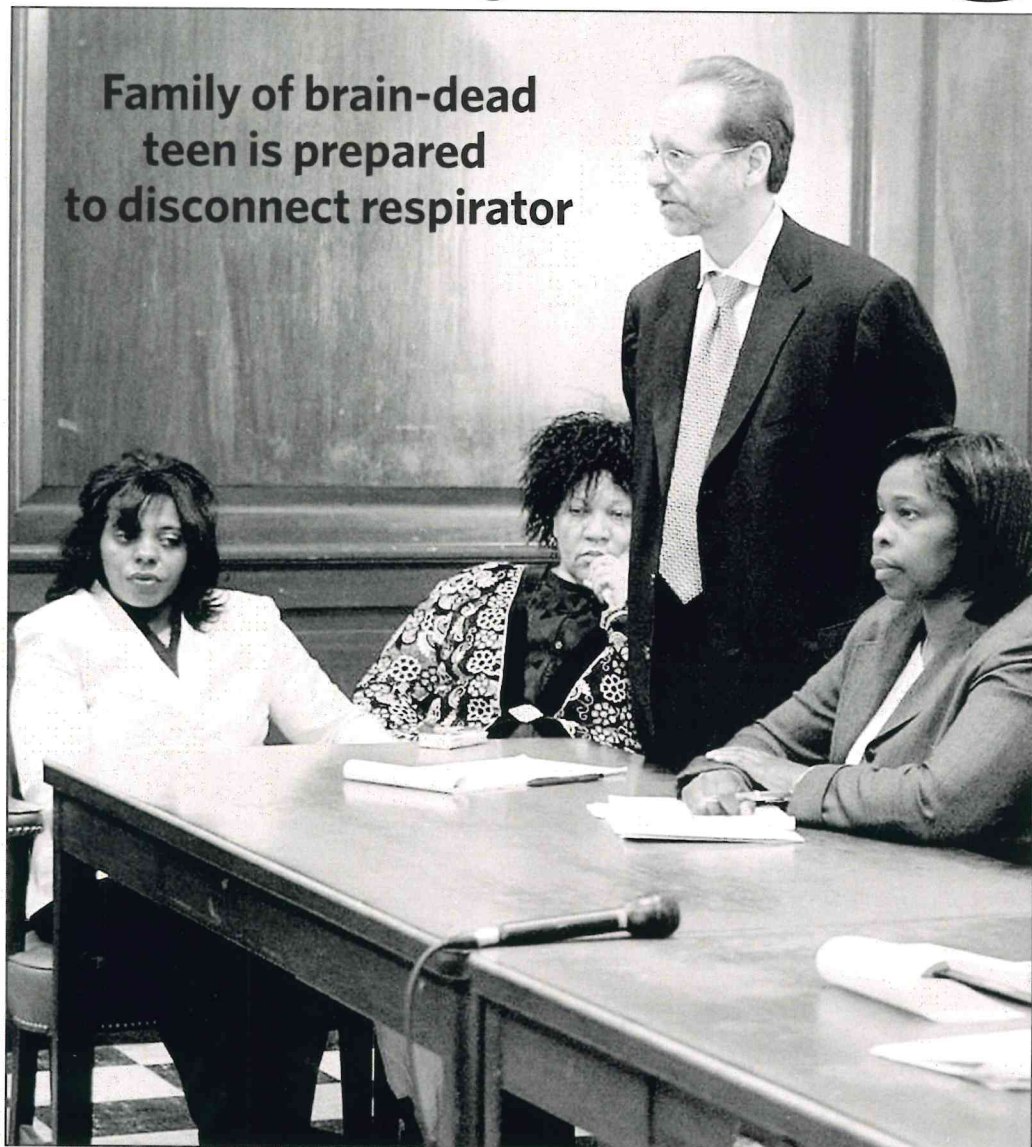


Ready for goodbye

Family of brain-dead teen is prepared to disconnect respirator



POOL PHOTO BY BRIGITTE STELZER
Teron Francis' aunt AnnMarie Douglas, left, and his mother, Marcerlyn Francis, with lawyers Robert Genis and Patsy Gouldborne, right, at state Supreme Court in the Bronx on Monday.

BY PETE BOWLES
STAFF WRITER

The family of a Bronx teenager who was declared brain dead by a hospital last week has come to terms with his fate and last night said they want to remove him from a respirator.

The family of Teron Francis, 13, said they plan to go to court at noon today to ask Supreme Court Justice Douglas McKeon to lift an injunction and allow Montefiore Medical Center to remove him from the machine.

"It was hard for the family to accept that he was brain dead, but we now have decided to take him off life support," said the aunt of Teron Francis, who was a seventh-grade student at Community School 4.

"We got a second opinion from our own doctor, who confirmed that Teron is dead," said Annmarie Douglas, 36, the sister-in-law of Teron's mother, Marcerlyn Francis. "If he is dead, we are not going to keep him on life support any longer."

The family's attorney, Robert Genis, who last week obtained a court order keeping Teron connected to a respirator, said the family's doctors will testify that Teron is brain dead, as maintained by the hospital all along.

"The mother will ask that the judge lift the injunction and end life support," Genis said. "This is the most dignified way for him to go and be with God. The mother now realizes her son is brain dead and there is no hope. She wants to let him die in a dignified and respectful manner."

Teron was taken to Bronx-Lebanon Hospital on April 18

complaining of a severe headache and toothache. The family said doctors conducted a CT-scan that showed an infection had spread to his brain.

After Teron went into convulsions and became unconscious, he was hooked up to a respirator and transferred to The Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center the next day.

A hospital spokesman could not be reached for comment last night. In a written statement released earlier this week, Dr. Gary Kalkut, Montefiore's medical director, said a team of hospital specialists determined Teron was brain dead within 24 hours after his arrival at the hospital and declared him dead April 21.

"Brain dead means the cessation of all functions of the brain," Kalkut said. "A diagnosis of brain death means the patient is dead."

The boy's family disagreed with the diagnosis and alleged that the hospital had threatened to remove Teron from his respirator.

Kalkut denied the allegation and said references to Teron being on "life support" were "inaccurate, confusing and misleading."

"In accordance with longstanding hospital policy, we are continuing to provide peripheral organ support with mechanical ventilation to give the family time to come to terms with Teron's death," Kalkut said.

"We hope that the Francis family will find peace, and we will continue to do everything we can to support them during this sad and difficult time," he added.