

Nurse is charged with rape after severely disabled woman in care home gives birth

By Rozina Sabur

A NURSE has been charged with rape after a severely disabled woman gave birth in a care home in America.

Nathan Sutherland was detained following an investigation into how the 29-year-old victim came to deliver a baby boy a few days after Christmas.

The 36-year-old, who was charged with sexual assault and vulnerable adult abuse, was responsible for providing care to the victim during the time the assault occurred.

He was arrested on Wednesday after his DNA was matched to that of the baby following tests involving all male members of staff at the Hacienda Health Care facility in Phoenix, Arizona. The victim, who police said "was not in a position to give consent",

had been a patient at the hospital since the age of three. Her family described her as having "significant intellectual disabilities as a result of seizures very early in her childhood".

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While she does not speak, she has some mobility in her limbs, head and neck. She also responds to sound and can make facial gestures, her relatives said in a statement.

The family's lawyer, John Micheaels, said his clients were "outraged" over the assault and are now looking after

the child. Tommy Thompson, a spokesman for Phoenix Police, said the baby boy was "doing good".

Phoenix Police Chief Jeri Williams said the case had become "the highest priority of our police department".

She added: "We owed this arrest to the victim. We owed this arrest to the newest member of our community – that innocent baby."

Staff at the facility said they had no idea the woman was pregnant and the case has triggered reviews by state agencies and highlighted safety concerns for severely disabled patients.

The CEO of the nursing facility resigned following the scandal and earlier this week the clinic announced that one of the victim's doctors had resigned and another had been suspended.

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