

A Washington County couple face criminal charges for leaving three young children in a parked vehicle outside the Rivers Casino while the adults gambled inside on Saturday.

Lounla Xayathep, 54, and Phayvong Peaungvong-Pakdy, 38, both of New Eagle, and originally from Laos, were charged with three counts each of leaving a child unattended in a motor vehicle and endangering

the welfare of a child.

They are accused of leaving three children alone in a parked vehicle for about 50 minutes. The children included a 10-month-old girl and boys ages 3 and 10.

Police said a passer-by notified a security guard at The Rivers at about 3:45 p.m. Saturday that he had seen three small children unattended in a minivan parked in the casino lot. Police were alerted.

Security video allowed authorities to determine that Ms. Peaungvong-Pakdy had left the vehicle at about 1:30 p.m. and entered the casino. Mr. Xayathep followed at about 3:07 p.m. Mr. Xayathep returned to the vehicle at about 4 p.m. after the casino gave a description of the vehicle over the public address system. Ms. Peaungvong-Pakdy followed soon after.

The couple were arrested and taken to Allegheny County Jail, where an interpreter was to be retained because of what police described as their limited understanding of English.

The children were placed in the care of caseworkers from Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families.

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