

Child testifies in molestation case

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By TAMMY McCOY
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A girl who says her former foster father, an ordained minister from Menifee, sexually assaulted her when she was 9 testified Wednesday that her allegations do not stem from seeing her mother engaged in sex.

"Did you make up these allegations because of what you saw your mom doing?" prosecutor Burke Strunsky asked.

No, the girl said. Initially, she answered yes to a similar question but then said she did not understand the question, so the prosecutor rephrased it.

Her voice was hushed and she appeared to maintain eye contact with Strunsky.

The girl's testimony came near the close of defendant Joseph Patrick Billock's trial at the Southwest Justice Center. The 50-year-old is charged with two counts of sexually assaulting the girl, now 11, while she lived with him in 2005. He faces 30-years-to-life in prison if convicted of all charges.

The Press-Enterprise does not publish the names of minors who claim to be victims of sexual assault.

While Billock is only charged with sexually assaulting one girl, a second foster child has accused him of sexual abuse. A 13-year-old girl testified during this trial and the jury can consider it as evidence of motive or a pattern of behavior. The two girls have never met and did not live in Billock's home at the same time, witnesses have testified.

Defense attorney Michael Pancer called the 11-year-old girl to testify about a conversation she had with Barbara Flores, a foster mother she lived with prior to the Billock family.

Flores, who is a social worker, and a therapist have given contradicting testimony about whether or not the girl showed signs of possible sexual abuse before she went to live with Billock's family in 2005.

Flores has testified that she noticed the girl was hugging and kissing a pillow, but did not consider it sexual behavior.

The girl's social worker, Kari Crittenden of Rancho Jireh Foster Care, has testified that Flores reported the girl was caught simulating sex with a pillow. However, Judge Albert

Wojcik later noted that Crittenden appeared to put her "own little interpretation on what was told to her."

Therapist Marilyn Davies testified Flores told her the girl had displayed some inappropriate sexual behavior, imitating sex with a pillow.

The final witness for the defense was Pastor Robin Altice of the Church of the Nazarene in Menifee.

Altice said Billock is an ordained minister and they have known each other for about 15 years.

Billock is a law-abiding man, Altice said.

Prosecutor Strunsky asked Altice if his opinion would change if he knew that two girls who did not know each other had accused him of sexually abusing them.

Altice said that does not change his opinion of Billock.

Strunsky shook his head from side to side.

"How does that not change your opinion?" the prosecutor asked.

"I'm basing my opinion on what I know of Joseph Billock," Altice replied.

After an objection from the defense, Strunsky asked Altice if there is anything that would change his opinion of Billock.

"No, there isn't," Altice said, "based on what I know of Joe."

Reach Tammy McCoy at 951-375-3729 or tmccoy@PE.com