

School counselor waited week to tell superiors of assault on girl

'As a parent I am appalled'

BY JONATHAN MARINO
Examiner Staff Writer

A guidance counselor at Wheaton High School who interviewed a 16-year-old girl who claimed she was sexually assaulted May 3 during a math class by four teenagers waited a week before notifying a supervisor about the incident, court records indicate.

The same teenagers were allowed to go to class with the girl for at least seven days after the counselor became aware of the incident on May 10, and the students were suspended May 18, according to school officials.

Two juveniles were charged May 20 in the incident and two were charged as adults May 24.

Montgomery County Public Schools' policy requires that "all

serious and unusual incidents are to be reported immediately to the principal/director," including sexual assaults.

School officials offered no explanation Thursday why the counselor waited a week.

"Normally, that is something that should be at the top of the priority list," said Gianna Tripodi-Bhise, communications director for the Metropolitan Center for Assault Prevention. "As a parent, I'm appalled."

The girl did wait a week after the May 3 incident to inform counselor Sara Castillo, who took a written statement from the alleged victim May 10, according to court documents. Castillo waited until May 17 to ask assistant principal Virginia de lo Santos "what her actions should be, if she obtained information regarding a student being sexually assaulted."

Records indicate de lo Santos informed Castillo that "it was her duty to report it." Castillo then advised de

lo Santos that she obtained a statement on May 10 from the victim that she was being "sexually assaulted by four Wheaton High School classmates."

School officials would not say if the counselor has been disciplined for failing to report the incident immediately to supervisors. However, the teacher, Joseph McMorrow, who was in the class where the incident took place, was placed on paid administrative leave May 20. Efforts to contact McMorrow were unsuccessful.

Schools spokesman Brian Edwards said the "whole matter is under investigation."

When an *Examiner* reporter contacted the school Thursday, a security official ordered him off the premises.

Wheaton Principal George Arlotto also declined comment. However, he praised the victim Wednesday for bravery. "She hasn't missed a day," he said, but failed to mention the girl had to go to class with her alleged

attackers for seven days. Edwards also praised the quick response of the school administration once the incident became known. "They were suspended immediately" on May 18, once MCPS became aware of the incident, Edwards said.

Edgar and Richard Yanez, 18-year-old twins, and two 17-year-olds, whose names were not released, were charged in the incident. Charging documents state that Richard Yanez also exposed himself to the girl and "propositioned" her "for sex for \$20."

According to the charging documents, a classmate witnessed the incident.

McMorrow, the teacher in the class, told authorities he did not witness it.

A boy who attends Wheaton, describing himself as a friend of the Yanez twins but declined to be named, said the brothers came to the U.S. from El Salvador about five months ago.

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Bond denied in stabbing

BY KATIE WILMETH
Special to The Examiner

The Greenbelt woman who police say went on a stabbing rampage Wednesday evening in a Bethesda Nordstrom had only been out of jail for one day when she took four butcher knives into the store and started stabbing people.

Antoinette C. Sparks, 48, of the 6000 block of Greenbelt Road, was released Tuesday from a Montgomery County jail where she was serving time for vandalism charges. She was denied bond and ordered to go for psychiatric evaluation Thursday.

CORRECTION

A Thursday, May 26, article incorrectly stated which branch of government proposed funding for the Prince George's County Police Department. County Executive Jack B. Johnson proposed \$183 million for the department's fiscal 2006 budget, a 15 percent increase over the 2005 allocation of \$159 million.

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