



Jury: Philly public defenders liable in child abuse case

Robert Moran

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A Philadelphia Common Pleas Court jury on Wednesday delivered a \$4.5 million verdict against the Defender Association of Philadelphia, a foster-care agency, and two foster parents in Lancaster County for abuse suffered by a twin brother and sister from Philadelphia.

The siblings, now 8 years old, were placed with the foster parents because their mother could not care for them, according to the children's lawyers, **Nadeem Bezar** and **Emily Marks** of the Philadelphia law firm Kline & Specter.

For more than three years, they suffered abuse in their foster home until they were removed in 2015 by a foster-agency worker, Bezar said. The children were taken into a basement, made to lay face down on a freezer, and beaten with hands or objects. In 2014, a Defender Association lawyer learned at a hearing about the girl's being forced to lower her underpants but did not pursue the matter, Bezar said.

In 2016, Wayne Keeny, the foster father, was charged in Lancaster County with unlawful contact with a minor, corruption of a minor, and aggravated indecent assault of a child, court records show. Rosella Keeny, the foster mother, was charged with endangering the welfare of children.

The cases were withdrawn a few months later, according to court records.

The jury on Wednesday decided that the Defender Association, which had an advocate role for the children, was liable for 55 percent of the verdict. Bethanna, which describes itself as a Christian organization that provides foster-care services, was liable for 20 percent. Bethanna reached a settlement before the nearly two-week trial.

Wayne Keeny was liable for 20 percent and Rosella Keeny was liable for 5 percent.

The children now live with their biological father, the lawyers said.

Keir Bradford-Grey, chief of the Defender Association, said she would issue a statement on the case later. A lawyer for the Keenys could not be reached for comment Friday.