

Local News

Family ties reviewed in probe

Father's ex-wives are one focus in abduction.

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Police are sorting through complicated family relationships in the abduction of a 5-year-old girl to rule out all possible suspects, sources said Thursday.

Also in the aftermath of Monday's child abduction at a West Philadelphia elementary school, a "climate manager" has been hired to oversee the safety of Bryant School, while the abducted girl's mother has retained a high-profile lawyer.

"The School District admittedly failed this child, but our focus today is on Mom taking care of her child," said Tom Kline, who on Wednesday was retained by Latifah Rashid and her 5-year-old daughter, Na'illa Robinson.

Kline on Thursday said he intended to "investigate and re-
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view carefully” how the school “allowed the abduction to occur.”

The girl's father, Terry Robinson, has been interviewed twice by police, including on the night of the girl's disappearance, and again Wednesday night by Special Victims Unit investigators, police sources said. The father has passed a polygraph, routine in child-abduction cases, and is not considered a suspect, sources said. He does not see Na'illa every day, according to the sources.

Investigators are in the process of locating and interviewing seven women Robinson identified as his current or former wives, plus any relationships the mother had — normal investigative steps to determine whether the kidnapping may have been domestic-related, sources said.

School District spokesman Fernando Gallard said Thursday that the abduction occurred because Bryant staff failed to follow an existing districtwide safety plan. The school's front-desk aide, who was supposed to direct visitors to the principal's office, has been reassigned, Gallard said.

Gallard said the district's new-

est climate manager began working at Bryant on Wednesday as a full-time employee. He said the district expects all Philadelphia public schools to “challenge” every visitor, asking for photo ID.

A woman impersonated Na'illa's mother to take the child from her kindergarten class Monday morning. The abductor was wearing a Muslim-style niqab, which includes a veil that covers all of the face except the eyes. The abductor, who police said was possibly pregnant and who may use the name Rashida, did not show any ID and walked in the class to take Na'illa away.

“The women in veils, we are respectable women. Our religion teaches us to be humble,” said a Muslim parent of a Bryant student near the school Thursday. The parent, who identified herself as Tauheedah, said the abductor “used a disguise to kidnap that child” and said the focus now has to be on “making sure that doesn't occur again.”

In 2011, a student was sexually assaulted by three other students in a restroom at Bryant. The students responsible for the assault were arrested.

Tauheedah said that incident and the abduction were making

her consider whether she should home-school her child.

Capt. John Darby, head of the police Special Victims Unit, said the abductor walked Na'illa to a home several blocks away from the school. At the home, a man, described as light-skinned or white, joined the abductor in blindfolding and restraining the 5-year-old, Darby said.

Police sources said that a third person in the house, another female possibly in her late teens or early 20s, took Na'illa to a park in Upper Darby and told her to call for help if she saw anyone. Na'illa was found about 4:40 a.m. Tuesday by a passerby.

Darby said the girl was found wearing only an adult T-shirt. Investigators are conducting tests on the shirt for any fibers or hair for DNA testing, police sources said.

Investigators interviewed Na'illa and are working with forensic interview experts from Philadelphia Children's Alliance.

Anyone with information on the incident should call 215-686-TIPS.

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