

Monsey boy, 12, was molested by camp counselor: lawsuit



Steve Lieberman, slieberm@lohud.com 11:32 p.m. EDT May 18, 2014



(Photo: Chris Brown/The Journal News)

The family of a 12-year-old Monsey boy has sued a Pennsylvania sleep-away camp, claiming a counselor molested their child and another camper last July before the owner tried covering up the abuse and gave the counselor a bus ticket home to Canada.

The lawsuit says the Monsey boy videoed the counselor molesting the other boy and accuses Camp Dora Golding and its owner, Alexander Gold of Brooklyn, of knowing the counselor had an attraction to younger boys.

The camp, which serves Orthodox Jewish children, also is accused in the 20-page lawsuit of covering up past sexual abuses. Many families in Rockland and Orange counties send their children to the camp, the family's

lawyer said.

The boy's father said his wife received a call from Gold telling them there was an incident at camp but their son was OK and provided no other details. Concerned, the couple left immediately for the camp, where their son told them what had happened.

"I was flipping out," the boy's father said last week. "They are not the first ones. On the way home from the camp, I was crying like a baby.

"I am now a lot more paranoid with the rest of my kids," the father of four said. "I feel our life has been violated by Gold and the camp."

Gold denied the charges through his lawyer, Matthew Flanagan.

"We are confident that the family and their lawyer will come to learn that Mr. Gold did not cover up anything," Flanagan said in an e-mail statement, "and that the camp acted entirely appropriately both before and after the incident to protect this child and all of the campers."

The counselor, Chisdai Ben-Porath, 20, who is named in the lawsuit, pleaded guilty in February to molesting the Monsey boy. He was sentenced to 5 to 23 months in Monroe County jail in Pennsylvania.

The family's lawyer, Brian Condon of Nanuet, and the boy's father said Gold refused to let him call his parents and first lied to parents about what happened to the two campers.

They said the boy's 2-minute video shows Ben-Porath picking up a camper and grinding his torso against the child at about 12:30 a.m. July 11. Ben-Porath then went to the Monsey boy's bunk and began massaging the child's buttock as the boy pretended to sleep in hopes that the counselor would ignore him.

The boy then jumped up, saw Ben-Porath looked sexually aroused and went under his bunk, telling Ben-Porath that he was looking for a computer game for his iPod Touch, according to his father and the family's lawsuit.

Condon said the other camper's family declined to press criminal charges against Ben-Porath or join the civil lawsuit.

"This is not a Jewish or Catholic issue," Condon said. "This is about pervert adults preying on the innocence of the kids. This is about a camp not doing background checks on the counselors and covering up sexual abuse."

Ben-Porath's lawyer, former Rockland District Attorney Kenneth Gribetz, acknowledged the content of the videotape. He said his client had no prior criminal record, recognized that what he did was wrong and is undergoing therapy. He said the Pennsylvania Sexual Offender Assessment Board did not deem Ben-Porath a sexually violent predator.

Gribetz said he expected Ben-Porath will be released after his July parole hearing and later deported to Canada.

The Monsey boy's father said he was angry at the lax attitude of the state police and prosecutors toward the abuse. He said if he and his wife had not pushed for an arrest, Ben-Porath would have been on a bus to Canada.

He said he agreed to downgrade the criminal charges to spare his son from testifying and being publicly identified. He also said he got phone calls from some rabbis and community members urging him to drop the charges.

Read the lawsuit:

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1154032-camp-dora-gold-monsey-boy.html> (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1154032-camp-dora-gold-monsey-boy.html>)

Read the camp's response:

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1160583-campdoradefanswer.html> (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1160583-campdoradefanswer.html>)

Read the counselor's response

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1160584-benporat-dfanswer.html> (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1160584-benporat-dfanswer.html>)

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