

Rape at day care?

Teacher's aide is charged with sexually abusing a boy, 4, in bathroom at Richmond Hill day care center

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A female teacher's aide at a Queens day care center was arrested and charged yesterday with raping and sexually abusing a 4-year-old boy several times within the past several weeks, prosecutors said.

Khemwattie Bedessie, 37, of 115-32 125th St., South Ozone Park, has worked about four years at nearby Veda's Learning World, a state-licensed private day care center on 128th Street, prosecutors said.

Law-enforcement sources said Bedessie abused the boy at least three times between early January and mid-February, each time early in the morning before other adults arrived for work.

The aide would separate the child from the other 13 to 15 children attending the day care center by taking him into the bathroom, authorities said.

The boy's mother contacted police and the day care center after the boy told her about the abuse, authorities said.

Bedessie confessed to authorities in a videotaped statement, according to sources familiar with the investigation, which allowed them to charge her with rape. The law permits rape to be charged in any prosecution involving vaginal penetration, however slight, authorities said.

Asked why Bedessie chose this child instead of any of the others, a source said, "He would run up and hug her and touch her ... like lots of little kids do."

Bedessie was arrested by a detective assigned to the Police Department's Child Abuse Squad at the Queens Child Advocacy Center.

She was awaiting arraignment in Criminal Court in Kew Gardens on charges of first-degree rape, six counts of first-degree sexual abuse and one count of endangering the welfare of a child.

If convicted, Bedessie faces up to 25 years in prison.

"The charges are very disturbing," Queens District Attorney Richard Brown said. "The child, I'm afraid, will never recover from the emotional trauma inflicted upon him by an individual into whose care he was entrusted by his parents."

Bebe Bacchus, 69, reacted with disbelief when she learned about her daughter's arrest. "I can't believe that because she's not that kind of person," Bacchus said. "She's very kind. If you talk to all the parents they will tell you she's very dutiful to the kids. She takes very good care of them."

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