

Lawyer says Sodus boy sexually assaults second graders on school bus

Brian Sharp

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Two second grade girls at Sodus Elementary allegedly were sexually assaulted last fall by a fellow student while on the school bus.

Surveillance video from inside the bus — described as “gruesome” by the girls’ lawyer — allegedly confirms their claims.

One of the girls since divulged that the back-of-the-bus attacks began when she first started riding the bus as a kindergartner.

“They are little girls. They weren’t coming forward with too much information,” said Tom Schiro, a lawyer with Belluck and Fox, which is representing the two families.

The boy is in the third or fourth grade, Schiro said, and remains at school. Based on information gathered thus far, he said, no other children are involved.

While not commenting of details of the alleged assaults, the district released a statement defending its handling of the matter. A spokesman for the Wayne County Sheriff’s Office said he was unable to comment on cases involving juveniles. This all came to light after a bus driver noticed the boy going back to the girls’ seats, and overheard students talking about what was going on, Schiro said. The driver alerted school officials, who pulled video, and allegedly spoke to one of the girls and showed her parts of the video before contacting her mother. More, and what Schiro said was worse, footage later was discovered.

The girls’ mothers filed notices of claim with the district, each seeking \$10 million in damages. That first step was taken in November, hearings since have been conducted, and the families are preparing to sue.

“Frankly, with a case like this, in order to get the compensation that these kids are going to need for a lifetime of therapy and issues that they are going to be dealing with, it’s a case that

is going to have to be litigated,” said Joe Belluck, another of the girls’ lawyers and a partner in the law firm.

As to why he is publicizing the allegations, Belluck explained: “The parents are very concerned that the school district is not taking this seriously,” The girls’ mothers “had to fight, tooth and nail” to get the boy removed from the bus, even after the district found videos of the assaults, Schiro said.

Even then, he only was transferred to a different bus. And while promising to keep the students separated at school, the boy allegedly since has confronted and bullied them.

“Student and staff safety is the number one priority of the Sodus Central School District,” the district’s statement read, insisting that to assert otherwise is untrue. The district also countered that officials had “reacted immediately to ensure that the girls would no longer be riding on the same bus as the accused boy.”

The notices of claim allege district officials failed to adequately staff its buses, train its personnel, review surveillance video in a timely fashion, and respond appropriately after learning of the allegations.

“The school district will vigorously defend any legal challenge filed by the families’ attorney,” the district statement concluded. “The school district does not anticipate commenting further regarding this pending litigation matter.”

BDSHARP@Gannett.com