

News **Litigation**

\$15M Settlement Reached in Lawsuit Alleging Camp Grooming, Sexual Assault

"The continuous failure at every level where intervention could have prevented this assault is why this case achieved the result that it did," said plaintiff's counsel Nadeem Bezar, partner at Kline & Specter.

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(l-r) Emily Marks, Nadeem Bezar, and George Zindel, with Kline & Specter. Courtesy photos

A \$15 million settlement has been reached in an Allegheny County lawsuit alleging a summer camp employee groomed and sexually assaulted a minor, according to the plaintiff's attorneys at Kline & Specter.

Nadeem Bezar, a partner at Kline & Specter, described the matter as an atypical case where numerous signs at every level were disregarded to protect the teenaged employee.

"You rarely get that kind of strong, obvious, bothersome testimony," Bezar said.

The 14-year-old plaintiff, who is named as J.G. in court documents found by Law.com, was an employee at Camp Allegheny, a subsidiary of The Salvation Army. She was represented by Bezar, Emily Marks and George Zindel of Kline & Specter.

The Salvation Army was represented by Darren M. Newberry and Patricia A. Monahan of Marshall Dennehey. Monahan deferred comment to Newberry. Repeated efforts to solicit comment from Newberry or The Salvation Army were unavailing.

Bezar said pretrial discovery of about 15 depositions was key in mapping out the progression of the grooming and culmination to sexual assault, seeking out all camp employees who could have any relation to the case. Depositions came from beyond Allegheny County, reaching areas including Ohio and New York.

"What we were trying to find out is given all of the protections that were supposedly in place, how did this happen?" Bezar said.

Nicholas Rose, 20 at the time, and J.G., 14 at the time, were hired to work at Camp Allegheny in the summer of 2022, according to court documents.

According to court documents, Rose initiated the physical relationship with J.G. and groomed her over the duration of the summer. Many instances of physical contact between the two were displayed in front of other employees, according to court documents, which escalated to being "open and obvious."

Rose was reported to have sexually assaulted the minor five to seven times, according to court documents.

Court documents point to multiple moments over Rose's hiring and work period in which protocols were ignored that could have led to intervention and prevention.

One such example in this case was the review of Rose's candidacy for employment.

Bezar said everyone who reviewed his candidacy said he was unqualified, except for the employee who had recommended him.

The camp also established a "risk reduction plan" for Rose so he would not be in proximity to animals and children without supervision. Bezar said the latter was also not enforced.

"The continuous failure at every level where intervention could have prevented this assault is why this case achieved the result that it did," Bezar said.

Part of the settlement was a requirement for safety mechanisms to be established to ensure that potential perpetrators are adequately screened and prevented employment as early as the hiring process, nor granted proximity to children.

While protections were in place at the time of the associated incident, Bezar said several were not adhered to. He described the settlement request as one that "doesn't have much mileage than it originally had."

Bezdar said a settlement of this nature sends a message, forcing corporations to pay attention.

"If you are going to be involved in the care and supervision of children, you better do it well," Bezdar said.

While a settlement was reached, Bezdar said he approaches every case as if it were to go to trial—including this one.

But beyond the \$15 million reward, all of which are noneconomic damages, Bezdar said they also sought another element to remedy the damages: a written apology from the person who referred the perpetrator for employment despite a prior criminal record of animal cruelty and allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor.

"That apology goes a long way in her healing process," Bezdar said, who spoke of the employee as a "more striking witness" who never expressed regret in his recommendation.

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