

Former Eugene police officer charged with domestic assault: "My daddy slapped me on my face"

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registerguard.com

2016 Cop Domestic Violence David Joshua Odom

A former Eugene police officer has been charged in a child abuse case more than a year after the alleged abuse was reported to the Department of Human Services and other authorities.

David Joshua Odom, who departed from the Eugene Police Department under contentious circumstances in 2013 only to be rehired one year later, was arraigned on a fourth-degree assault charge in Lane County Circuit Court Monday morning.

He pleaded not guilty, according to court records. His next hearing is scheduled for Aug. 29. He is 39.

Eugene police spokesman John Hankemeier said Monday that Odom's last day at the Eugene Police Department was Jan 2, 2015. He did not indicate whether Odom resigned or was fired.

The child abuse incident came to police attention on June 2, 2015, one or more days after Odom allegedly slapped his 3-year-old son in the face, leaving a mark.

According to a report filed last year by Oregon State Police Sgt. Andy Kenyon, Odom dropped his son off at day care with an injury to his face that appeared to be bruising.

At first, the boy told day care workers that the injury was inflicted by his 4-year-old brother, the report states. But then, the boy allegedly claimed that it came from his father, later telling a child--intervention specialist during an interview, "my daddy slapped me on my face ... because I woke up in my bedroom."

Day care employees contacted DHS and state police, who arrived at the day care center to speak with and photograph the victim, according to the report. Then, suddenly, Odom allegedly showed up to retrieve his sons, three hours earlier than expected, according to police, and only five minutes after having dropped off his oldest son.

One day care worker "was noticeably concerned and indicated it was unusual for David to pick up the boys before 6 (p.m.)," the report reads.

Kenyon explained to Odom why authorities were there, the report states.

"David appeared to be very surprised and was at a loss for words initially," the report reads. Odom was uncooperative, and when Kenyon asked Odom if he could photograph the child's facial bruising, Odom told him "no."

Odom allegedly told a DHS caseworker that he did not know how the injury occurred on his son's face, stating, "He gets bruised a lot because he is so active."

Photos were eventually taken of the boy's face at the day care center by a DHS employee. The boy was interviewed the next day at the Kids' First Center, a child abuse intervention agency.

A photograph of a boy with a large red mark that appears to be a handprint on his face was submitted anonymously to The Register-Guard. Kenyon confirmed that the boy in the photo is Odom's son.

The boy's 4-year-old brother also was interviewed at Kids' First and told a worker, "My dad slap him when he not be quiet." The brother said that his younger sibling was slapped because he had gotten out of bed, gone into the shower and ate food.

Odom was charged with assault on July 18, records show. It wasn't immediately clear why more than a year elapsed between the alleged incident and the filing of the misdemeanor charge.

Kenyon said he was surprised to learn Monday that Odom is being charged now, having assumed that any case against him had been dismissed. In his 2015 report, Kenyon had written, "I respectfully request the Lane County District Attorney's Office to review this report and determine if it's appropriate to file charges."

Kenyon said Monday that he understands the difficulty in trying to prosecute a case with young children as the only witnesses.

"It's not as simple as people would assume, although it's a really emotionally charged subject matter when you're talking about injured children," Kenyon said.

Odom's departure from the Eugene Police Department in 2013 followed a lengthy internal investigation that began in August 2012, when Odom allegedly called 911 to request a "civil stand-by" while he was off-duty. A civil stand-by is when an officer is requested to monitor a situation to keep the peace involving a dispute.

Then-Lane County Chief Deputy District Attorney Patty Perlow later issued a letter, after authorities investigated the incident, stating that Odom had been "untruthful regarding the events involved in the 911 call."

At the time, Eugene police refused to disclose the police report associated with the case because the city had forwarded it to DHS officials as part of a child abuse investigation, making the report confidential under state law. That incident occurred three years before the child abuse allegation for which Odom was charged Monday.

Eugene police never revealed whether Odom had quit or been fired from his job in 2013. However, Odom's wife wrote in 2014 divorce filings that her husband had been fired.

Odom won his job back in 2014 when an arbitrator ruled in his favor after Odom filed a tort claim, stating he intended to sue the city for transferring him against his will from a job at the Eugene Airport to a "modified duty assignment." A lawsuit was never filed.

Although Eugene police said he was not employed by the department at the time of the alleged child-abuse incident in the summer of 2015, the state police report referred to Odom as a Eugene police officer.