

Parents awarded \$7 million in suit against child-care center

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Start Page: A.1

Section: Main

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DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

After two hours of deliberation, a six-member jury awarded more than \$7 million on Tuesday to the parents of a baby brutally attacked by a toddler at a Tallahassee child care center, attorney David Frank said Tuesday.

The defendants, Cradle to Crayons Child Care Center Inc., and the owner-operator, Keisha Davis, did not appear at the one-day trial presided over by Judge William Gary and they were not represented by an attorney. Cradle to Crayons is licensed by the Department of Children and Families.

"I was not there at the time of the incident," Davis said later Tuesday. "The case was reported to DCF and DCF investigated; if you want to know more, you should ask them."

Frank, who represented the victim's parents, said his clients don't expect to collect all the money they were awarded.

"They'll never collect that much money from this day care, but hopefully in the process of collecting what they can, the center will be closed," he said. "It's not about the money, it's about justice."

The center is still open and operating. Frank said the center did not have liability insurance, but Davis said the center did have insurance, and she said she plans to keep it open.

The toddler, whose identity is not being released, bit the then 7-month-old baby all over her body while she was at the center. The incident occurred after the toddler walked out of the toddler room and into the infant area, Frank said. He said no one was watching the baby at the time.

The baby's father, Orlando Ramos, 33, said an employee at Cradle to Crayons called him when the incident occurred last March 21.

"The (employee) called, but didn't explain what the situation was," Ramos said following the verdict. "She just said 'Oh, she got bitten by another kid,' and when I got there, I was in shock when I saw my daughter."

Photos show the baby's torn and bloody face, and bite marks on her arms, legs, torso and hairline, Frank said. She also had rug burns.

"Her face was ripped, and there were bite marks....all over her body," Frank said.

The incident is recorded on the DCF Web site, where a report said there was a lack of infant supervision in the case.

The report reads: "Direct supervision of children in the toddler group was inadequate in that a toddler was able to leave his group unknown to his caregivers. Direct supervision of the infant group was also inadequate in that the caregiver responsible for the infants left the children unsupervised for at least five (5) minutes."

Frank said the center was fined \$100 by the Department of Children and Families following its investigation. Agency officials could not be reached Tuesday to confirm that figure.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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