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Salisbury mom sentenced in false rape report case

BY SHARAHN D. BOYKIN • STAFF WRITER • JULY 22, 2010

SALISBURY -- A 31-year-old Salisbury mother was sentenced to six months of jail time after admitting she coerced her daughter into falsely accusing a man of sex abuse.

Debra Ann Tawes of Smith Street was convicted of giving a false statement to officers on Tuesday. She was sentenced to the maximum penalty allowed under state law for the misdemeanor charge.

"We're going to take false allegations seriously," said Jamie Dykes, the prosecutor. "The integrity of our system depends on that."

Tawes was taken into police custody in February after police issued a warrant for her arrest on obstructing and hindering, giving a false statement to an officer and contributing to the condition of a child (causing or encouraging a child to participate in a crime), according to court records.

The warrant was issued after city police were dispatched to Smith Street on Jan. 12 in response to a domestic disturbance, according to the state's attorneys office.

While officers were at the residence, Tawes told officers that her three-year-old daughter had reported she was sexually molested by a male roommate, according to charging documents. Officers contacted the Child Advocacy Center and Department of Social Services personnel who in turn interviewed the alleged victim and suspect.

The child was removed from the home and placed with family members as part of a voluntary "safety plan" after the interviews.

Investigators became suspicious that Tawes had influenced the child after investigators interviewed the alleged victim a second time on Jan. 15. The child's statements during the interview were inconsistent with her initial report, according to charging documents.

When confronted by investigators the same day, Tawes admitted she told the girl to lie even though the roommate did not touch her, according to charging documents.

"Tawes said this was a result of an argument she had with Lynch on Jan. 12," wrote Det. J. Seichepine in charging documents.

She told investigators she was angry with the alleged suspect because he had "interjected into to an argument" she had with her sister.

Tawes' 3-year-old daughter remains in the care of relatives, according to the state's attorneys office.

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