

Girl, 7, Testifies About Sexual Assault and Abuse

by Sanford Schmidt
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EDWARDSVILLE - A 7-year-old girl testified Wednesday about an act of sexual penetration on her when she was 6.

She testified against John W. Webb, 54, who is charged with predatory sexual assault, and two counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. He could get up to 30 years in prison on the assault charge and between three and seven years each on the abuse charges.

The child was escorted into the room by attorneys and court staff while the jury was not present. The unusual step was made to ease the child's fears.

Until she started answering questions, she sat in the witness box with her hands covering her face. She told about the act of oral penetration, and an expert testified about a video interview the girl gave at the Madison County Child Advocacy Center.

In the video-recorded interview, the child told interviewer Jennifer Kampworth about several times Webb allegedly touched her over her clothing on her private parts. She volunteered the information with little prompting from Kampworth.

She said the alleged abuse offenses occurred while she was visiting a relative's house in Granite City.

She said a relative of the defendant observed the inappropriate touching, and that triggered an investigation.

"He did bad things. I don't go back there," the alleged victim testified. "He always touched me down there," she said, adding that Webb would touch her "all the time when I come over there."

During the investigation, the child revealed the alleged sexual assault. The alleged crimes occurred between Feb. 9, 2019, and Aug. 7, 2020, according to a court document. Webb was charged on Aug. 10, 2020.

The trial continues Thursday before Associate Judge Ron Slemer.