

Woman Sentenced After Her Conviction In Highly Disturbing Preschool Case

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EAST ST. LOUIS - Mary M. Agbehia, 29, of South Holland, IL., has been sentenced for or a misbehavior tactic used in 2019 for the punishment of students. The former East St. Louis preschool teacher was convicted of ordering children to stand naked in a closet for punishment for misbehavior.

She had previously pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated battery and three counts of unlawful restraint and in return had three other counts dropped with the plea agreement. The accusation was that she ordered children to disrobe in these pre-school misbehavior situations as well as removing their clothing herself.

Circuit Judge Zina Cruse sentenced Agbehia to one year in prison and 24 months of probation. She was ordered to register as a violent offender against youth for 10 years. She also cannot have contact with the victims or be in any type of profession involving children under 10 years old.

SIUE Police Chief Kevin Schmoll said his detectives did an outstanding job investigating this case and many others as well. With her sentence, Schmoll said Agbehia will never be able to teach young children again, which is a good thing. He said this case was not common and the detectives had to spend a lot of hours.

Agbehia started at the SIUE-operated Head Start program in East St. Louis in 2016. The program is located in the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center in East St. Louis. SIUE Police Chief Kevin Schmoll reported in 2019 that he had been alerted that a Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center supervisor called about a teacher who made children ages 4 and 5, who would misbehave by talking or not listening, stand in a closet naked with the door open for five or 10 minutes. After that period they would be allowed to put their clothes back on and rejoin the class.

“I am glad it came to a resolution and she will not be teaching children again,” Schmoll said of the Agbehia case.