

Foster child placed in West Philly 'house of horrors' wins \$11 million in lawsuit

New details emerge about infamous West Philly foster father.



SAM NEWHOUSE
@snewhouse
sam.newhouse@metro.us

Walter Scott, 63, has been inmate #MK5319 since his 2015 conviction on multiple charges of sexually abusing children, and is currently serving his 20-year sentence at the state correctional facility in Graterford.

But new details are only now coming to light about what exactly transpired inside Scott's West Philly home, which was once a government-sanctioned foster home for children in need.

"It was a house of horrors," said attorney Nadeem Bezar, of Kline & Specter P.C., who last week along with co-counsel Emily Marks won an

\$11 million verdict on behalf of Scott's adopted daughter, who came forward in 2015 after she saw Scott charged with abusing other children.

"The Scotts actually adopted this child," Bezar said. "It's just that much more disgusting and torturous, to say, 'I want to take you, I'm going to give you my name,' while this man is doing these horrible things."

The victim, now 23, was 6 in 2000 when she was placed in Scott's home. By the age of 10, she was had been raped by Scott, Bezar said.

The victim only remembers three separate assaults, Bezar said, and survived 12 more years in Scott's Florence Street home the age of 18.

She also experienced emotional abuse during her time there, Bezar said. Scott and his wife verbally abused her, at some points



Attorney Nadeem Bezar, of Kline & Specter PC, just won an \$11M verdict for a woman who was abused as a child by her adoptive parents. CHARLES MOSTOLTER

packing her possessions and threatening to throw her out of their home.

Bezar said despite "obvious tension between the child and her foster mother," physical punishment and signs of abuse, the victim was adopted by the Scotts with the ap-

proval of Bethanna, the foster care agency which originally placed the victim with Scott. Bethanna said it is "saddened" by the abuse in this case and said "litigation is ongoing." They noted that jurors only found the agency 10 percent at

fault, and asserted their staff had "no knowledge whatsoever of these terrible incidents."

Bezar said social workers missed signs of sexual abuse, including bed-wetting, regression in speech and behavior, and a sexual "acting out" incident involving touching a boy.

The jury ordered the \$11 million verdict (\$10 million compensatory and \$1 million punitive damages) against

Scott, who is not believed to have substantial assets, and Bethanna, which since 2015 has been a "community umbrella agency" (CUA) contracted by Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide foster care and other social services. In DHS' recent public CUA "scorecard," Bethanna, which is licensed by the state, received the worst score of all 10 CUAs: a grade of a "D,"

and a ranking of 10th. "Philadelphia DHS monitors all CUAs for quality of child welfare practice," DHS spokeswoman Heather Keifer stated. "If CUAs do not show improvement over time, then Philadelphia DHS will evaluate their ability to continue contracting with Philadelphia DHS to provide child welfare case management."

Keifer said the state's Department of Human Services licenses foster homes and is responsible for investigating allegations of wrongdoing. "We are saddened to learn about this incident which occurred in 2000," Keifer said via email about the recent case. "When Philadelphia DHS is alerted by the state about issues with a foster home, we immediately take the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of children in its care."