

## **Boy to remain with Childrens Services**

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- A 6-year-old boy whose parents sent him to school dressed as a girl will remain in foster care, a magistrate decided after hearing testimony about whether the child has a gender identity disorder. A public defender appointed to represent the child testified Tuesday that the parents could be trying to gain attention and sympathy for themselves.

"There is a suspicion of Munchausen syndrome by proxy," Rebecca Steele, said as she argued in Franklin County Juvenile Court to keep the child in the custody of Children Services.

Steele said the couple had taken the boy to 13 doctors and had him hospitalized four times between January 1998 and June. Munchausen syndrome by proxy is a condition in which a care provider harms a child to get attention.

Magistrate Lorenzo Sanchez ruled the agency could keep custody of the child pending a November trial.

The boy was removed from the home of Sherry and Paul Lipscomb of Westerville last month after they informed school officials the child would wear girl's clothes and have a girl's name this school year. The child attended kindergarten as a boy last year.

The Lipscombs say their son has been diagnosed with a gender-identity disorder by a specialist in Cincinnati.

"It feels like you are in the wrong body," the boy's father told The Columbus Dispatch for a story Wednesday. "All this basically boils down to is the school couldn't handle a child going to school in a dress. There's no law that says you can't go to school and express your gender."

Gender-identity disorder is recognized by the medical community and may have psychological and physiological causes, specialists say. Doctors say it can show up in the toddler stage, when children begin to identify themselves as either male or female.

Steele said the boy was diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and had violent and obsessive behavior, but the boy's parents often failed to follow through with prescribed treatment.

Children Services has alleged the Lipscombs neglected the youngster's medical and psychological needs.

Agency attorney Keith Cornwell said symptoms of a gender-identification disorder have not been apparent during the child's stay in a foster home.

Mark E. Narens, attorney for the couple, said the parents took the boy to specialists at the direction of their pediatrician and continued until they were able to find a proper diagnosis.

Mrs. Lipscomb said she never wanted the diagnosis for her child.

"A transsexual in our community is the most taboo of all areas," she told the newspaper.

"We're all looking at a 6-year-old kid who is dealing with these issues. It is much easier to squelch it and not let her be what she is supposed to be."

Emanuel Fineberg, a psychologist from Cliffside Park, N.J., said in a letter to the county that the agency is doing more harm than good to the child and family.

"In my view, a lack of professional knowledge of gender diversity and a lack of proper guidance and treatment reportedly shown by your agency in this case is scandalous," he wrote.