

Newton man found guilty of sex abuse charge

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OZARK — A man who claimed he never sexually abused a 3-year-old girl in his custody spoke for himself on Thursday, and in the end, was convicted of one charge but not another.

A jury unanimously found Rodrick Linder, 35, of Newton, guilty on Thursday of one of the two sexual abuse charges he was facing, both involving a 3-year-old girl.

Linder had been charged with the two counts of sexual abuse in November 2008.

Linder contended he frequently applied medicine to the child's private area when the child was 3 for a large boil that was draining.

The child, now 5, was in Linder's care for most of her life, but was given back to her mother after the charges were filed, according to authorities.

Linder said he did not believe the girl was sexually abused by anyone because she was mostly in his custody, and that he could not think of anyone who would have committed such a crime.

"I've touched her since birth ... I know I was bathing her. I know I was putting medicine on her. (Prosecutors) say it was sex. I know that's not what I did," he said.

Dale County Assistant District Attorney Bill Filmore said the evidence was clear that the girl was sexually abused.

"She's lost a lot — her privacy, her dignity. On the other hand, Linder has everything to gain by not telling you the truth," Filmore said.

"All you need is (her) testimony. ... This child was not coached. A child this young could not continue a story like this. People don't realize how prevalent sexual

abuse and assaults are ..."

Linder's attorney, Tammy Stinson, said the girl's case was not fully investigated and that Linder's explanation of what could have happened to his daughter never changed.

"Everything needs to be done that could possibly be done. What happens if the investigator did not do everything and the perpetrator got away?" Stinson asked.

"Why was the sexual offender across the street never interviewed? It was said (the child) had nightmares about a boogeyman Well, what is (the) boogeyman (to her)? ... I believe there were two victims here, (the girl) and (Linder)."

A sentencing hearing was set for next month, and Linder was ordered to serve in the Dale County Jail until then.

Because of the child's age, he faces between 10 and 20 full years in a state prison.