

Mother guilty of beating daughter

Jul 17, 2009

BY KEITH EPPS

A woman who hit her teenage daughter more than 20 times with a belt received a jail sentence yesterday.

Ronetta Latisha Washington, 36, pleaded guilty to domestic assault and battery and felony child abuse in Fredericksburg Circuit Court.

The pleas came just before a jury trial was about to start. Washington received a 12-month jail sentence on the misdemeanor assault charge, which was reduced from malicious wounding.

She will be sentenced Sept. 21 on the felony charge. She could receive two to 10 years on that conviction.

According to prosecutor Travis Bird, the beating occurred on Jan. 14 at a home on Princess Elizabeth Street in the city.

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Washington left work early that day after finding out that her 14-year-old daughter had violated house rules by having a boy in the home.

Bird said Washington told police that she didn't leave work immediately because she wanted to "cool down."

But she was apparently still plenty hot when she got home and confronted her daughter.

She hit the child repeatedly, causing injuries to her neck, shoulder, back, arms, legs and face.

Bird said the girl was in the fetal position, apologizing and begging her mother to stop.

Bird said Washington finally stopped pounding on the child after the mother's boyfriend came in and told her that was enough.

Bird said the mother then cut off a large section of the girl's hair as further punishment.

The next day, Bird said, the girl called her grandmother and told her she was in a lot of pain. The grandmother told her to go to school and tell someone what happened.

The girl did and was taken to Mary Washington Hospital for treatment. Police and child protective services were called.

Cpl. Rashawn Cowles interviewed Washington and got warrants for her arrest.

Bird said that while corporal punishment is a legal form of discipline, "this had nothing to do with discipline. She was angry and embarrassed and she went way too far."

The girl and her brother are now in the custody of their father.

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