

Four involved in child sexual assault case, 2 teachers

January 27, 2020



Updated report from Friday, Jan 24:

The Del Norte County Sheriff's Office arrested Edward Bert Steele, 48, last Thursday morning, the fourth individual in a case regarding child sexual abuse allegations dating from 2011 to 2019.

Although three other suspects already had been arrested, Steele's whereabouts were unknown. Sheriff's deputies found him sleeping in a car at a residence on Kings Valley Road.

Steele faces charges of suspicion of aggravated sexual assault of a minor and kidnapping to commit sexual assault. The victim was born in 2006, other media have reported.

Two of the other three suspects - Kathleen Mary Fuson, 60, and Katlin Janice Marie Nole, 43 - are employees of the Del Norte Unified School District. Fuson worked for the school district since February 2011, and Nole since January 2018.

Fuson worked as a second-grade teacher at Pine Grove Elementary School, while Nole worked as a special-education instructional assistant.

"The Del Norte County District Attorney has assured me that the alleged conduct leading to the arrests did not occur on district property, did not involve students at school, and were not related to the course and scope of the employees' employment with the district," school Superintendent Jeff Harris said in a press release.

"Nevertheless, the district takes the allegations very seriously and will work with law enforcement and the Del Norte County District Attorney's office, as needed, to resolve the matter."

Both women were taken into custody Jan. 17. They have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of legal action, according to Harris.

He said the district is working on hiring long-term substitutes for the remainder of the school year.

Nole and Fuson face charges of suspicion of continuous sexual abuse of a child. Nole faces an additional charge of suspicion of sexual intercourse with a child 10 years old or younger.

The fourth suspect is Jody Nole, 49, who has been in custody since June 2019 and was transferred from the High Desert State Prison in Susanville to Pelican Bay State Prison.

He appeared in court with Katlin Nole and Fuson on Tuesday and Thursday of last week.

Jody Nole faces charges of suspicion of sexual intercourse or sodomy with a child 10 years old or younger, continuous sexual abuse of a child, and aggravated sexual assault of a child.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with pertinent information is asked to contact the Del Norte County District Attorney's Office at 450 H St. in Crescent City, or by calling 707-464-7210.

Additionally, Harris encouraged anyone with concerns regarding sexual assault within the Del Norte School District to call 707-460-0203.

Previously reported by the Triplicate on Wednesday, Jan 22:

The Del Norte County district attorney has filed charges against four individuals regarding child sexual abuse allegations dating from 2011 to 2019.

Two of those charged - Kathleen Mary Fuson, 60, and Katlin Janice Marie Nole, 43 - are employees of the Del Norte Unified School District, Fuson since February 2011 and Nole since January 2018.

Both were taken into custody Jan 17.

The alleged conduct was not related to their employment with the district and did not occur on district property, according to Del Norte Superintendent Jeff Harris.

Nole's husband, Jody Nole, 49, and Edward Bert Steele, 48, are the other two individuals named in the case.

Jody Nole faces charges of suspicion of sexual intercourse or sodomy with a child 10 years old or younger, continuous sexual abuse of a child, and aggravated sexual assault of a child.

He is currently held in Pelican Bay State Prison, but appeared for arraignment along with Fuson and Katlin Nole on Jan 21.

Fuson was arrested after school at Pine Grove Elementary School, where she worked as a second-grade teacher.

Katlin Nole worked as a school district special-education instructional assistant and was taken into custody at Del Norte High School.

The district has placed both on administrative leave, according to Harris.

"The district is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all of our students. All of our staff get training about appropriate relationships with students. The district encourages staff to immediately report any misconduct," Harris said.

Katlin Nole and Fuson face charges of suspicion of continuous sexual abuse of a child. Nole faces an additional charge of suspicion of sexual intercourse with a child 10 years old or younger.

Steele faces charges of suspicion of aggravated sexual assault of a minor, and kidnapping to commit sexual assault. He was not apprehended and his whereabouts are unknown, said District Attorney Katherine Micks.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with pertinent information is asked by the Del Norte District Attorney's Office to call 707-464-7210.

Additionally, Harris encouraged anyone with concerns regarding sexual assault within the Del Norte Unified School District to call assistant superintendent Tom Kissinger at 707-460-0203.