



Rick Staly, Sheriff

## FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."*

# NEWS RELEASE

**Date:** November 15, 2019

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**Release #:** 226

### **FCSO Responded to Two Separate Child Abuse Calls on Thursday**

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) responded to two separate child abuse calls on Thursday. The first was reported at 8:20 a.m. at Buddy Taylor Middle School after a 14-year-old student reported that his step-mother pulled him by the hair, punched him, grabbed him by the neck, and head-butted him on Wednesday afternoon, November 13. The school guidance counselor alerted School Resource Deputy Petty who contacted the Department of Children and Families (DCF).



Left: Berndt's booking photo.



Right: Bass' booking photo.

The investigation revealed that the child's step mother, 38-year-old Teresa Berndt (DOB 10/1/1981), was upset after the child got off at a friend's bus stop instead of coming straight home after school on Wednesday. Berndt located the child on Wellwood Lane in Palm Coast and forced him into the car. Once they arrived home, the child was told by Berndt to clean the bathroom tiles with a toothbrush. When the child resisted, an argument ensued resulting in Berndt sitting on top of the child and head-butting him while he was laying on the tile floor.

The child had injuries consistent with excessive force being used to discipline the child. Berndt was placed under arrest and charged with Child Abuse. She was release on her own recognizance (ROR) on Friday morning after first appearance.

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Later on Thursday afternoon, deputies responded to Cherry Street in Bunnell for a separate child abuse case. The 17-year-old victim told deputies that her father had punched her in the face twice with a closed fist and wrapped his hands around her neck preventing her from breathing.

The investigation revealed that the child's step mother asked for the television remote and the child refused to give it to her. The father overheard the argument and screamed at the child to hand over the remote. When she refused, the father, 36-year-old Andrew Bass (DOB 12/6/1982), proceeded to punch his daughter, causing her to temporarily lose consciousness. He then placed his hands around her neck and squeezed until she couldn't breathe. When the fight ended, the step-mother drove the child to her mother's house, where law enforcement was contacted. The child had finger marks around her neck, a red swollen eye, and a bloody nose. Bass left the scene prior to law enforcement arrival.

Deputies made contact with Bass by phone who stated he was unavailable to give a statement at the time but would follow up with deputies later. He then refused to answer any further calls. At 3:11 a.m. on Friday, November 15, Bass was located at his residence and taken into custody. Bass was charged with Child Abuse, Domestic Battery, and Battery by Strangulation. He remains in jail with no bond.

"I am proud of these children for coming forward and reporting the abuse before it could get any worse," Sheriff Rick Staly said. "All children should know that they can approach a trusted teacher, school resource deputy, or call us for help. Parents have the right to discipline their children but it must be done appropriately and without violence. I hope that this is a wakeup call for the parents to learn proper parenting and appropriate child discipline. I hope the families get the help they need from DCF."

Child Abuse and Neglect can be reported by calling 9-1-1, the FCSO non-emergency line at 386-313-4911, or by calling the abuse hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE (22873).

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