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Date: 2005/02/24 Thursday Page: 022 Section: UNION Edition: UNION Size:
352 words

Essex to pay \$155G for teen's jail assault

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Essex County has agreed to pay \$155,000 to a Bloomfield teenager who was beaten and forced to perform a sexual act on another teen while in a holding cell at family court in Newark.

According to the settlement, which was approved Tuesday by U.S. District Magistrate Patty Schwartz, the 17-year-old boy will receive two payments of \$50,000 from the county and a third payment of \$55,000 between now and January 2007.

The agreement puts to rest a federal civil rights lawsuit filed in 2003 by the teenager and his family. County officials said yesterday that in addition to the settlement, they have changed the procedure for bringing juvenile detainees to court in order to prevent such an assault from happening again.

"This was the first incident and the last," said assistant county counsel Alan Ruddy, who handled the case for the county.

The assault occurred on April 23, 2003, while the Bloomfield boy, who was 16 at the time, was being held on robbery charges. According to his attorney, [Vincent Sanzone](#), the teen was in a holding cell on the ninth floor of the Wilentz Court Complex on Washington Street awaiting a family court hearing when three other detainees in the cell attacked him.

The attackers, who were 14, 15, and 17 at the time, forced the Bloomfield teen to remove his pants and beat him with a belt across the buttocks, [Sanzone](#) said. Afterward, one of the assailants forced the teen to perform a sexual act on him.

Following the incident, the three attackers were charged and sentenced to time at the New Jersey Training School for Boys in Monroe Township. According to the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the 14-year-old pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and was sentenced to 18 months.

In the lawsuit - which named the Essex County Department of Public Safety, Sheriff Armando Fontoura and former county detention center director Dana Hobson - [Sanzone](#) argued that the sheriff's officers assigned to monitor the holding cell had not maintained proper supervision of the detainees, allowing the assault to occur.

