

ROSENBERG, Texas — A family in Rosenberg says they were horrified after video showed their 5-year-old son with autism being mistreated in the classroom. They were clued into the incident after he came home with an injured foot.

At their request, a video from inside a classroom at was released to the family. For about 18 minutes of the 20-minute clip, the child is not visible, as the paraprofessional carried him into a small, windowless changing room.

The district referred to the room as a "calm down room" or "sensory room."

Although the child is not visible, you can hear him talking, crying, and screaming.

This past September, Destiny and Ruth Omiree's son came home from school with an injury to his toe. He couldn't explain what happened but it was obvious he had been hurt.

"He literally told me, 'daddy...they hurt me. They hurt me real bad,'" explained Destiny Omiree, the boy's father.

Ruth Omeire, the mother, went to the school asking questions and said she was told conflicting stories about what happened. The parents then asked for surveillance video and three months later, when they received it, they had a hard time getting through it.

"Literally took us three attempts to watch the full video," said Destiny Omeire. "It was too emotional."

The video begins with the little boy sitting alone against a wall. You could hear his paraprofessional telling him to sit there. A few moments later, the boy goes over to another child sitting on a different carpet. That's when the woman comes over to the boy, grabs his arm, and tries to take him to a door, but he resists and goes back to the wall.

"You can immediately tell my son was horrified," said the mother. "Like, he knew where he was going. He knew he was going to the dark room."

The paraprofessional then unlocks a door, picks the child up and brings him to the small changing room. He stays in there for at least 18 minutes. It's unclear if the paraprofessional is in the room with him or not, however, her voice can be heard throughout the video.

At first, you can tell that the lights are off in this room. Four minutes later he can be heard saying he's sorry.

"Sorry's not gonna work!", the woman is heard saying.

Over the next several minutes the paraprofessional continually raises her voice and tells him to sit down.

"Just giving him orders and just screaming," explained Ruth, his mother, "and to me, I was like...why are you screaming at a 5-year-old?"

Ruth Omeire isn't only a mother of a child with special needs, she's also a speech-language pathologist with the district. She often works with children with disabilities and says she is concerned that her speaking out could put her job in jeopardy.

At some point, the boy is injured by a door going over his toe. It's unclear in the video how that happened but for several minutes he cries and is heard saying, "foot is hurting!" The paraprofessional can also be heard saying she doesn't know how he hurt his foot.

By this point, the child had taken his clothes off, which is not unusual for a child with autism to do. Toward the end of the video, a male voice is heard telling the boy to get dressed if he wants a Band-Aid.

"I would like to see her fired and lose her license," said Karen Mayer Cunningham, a **special education** advocate. "For her to work around children, most of them can't speak or defend themselves."

Below is a statement from **Lamar CISD**:

"The employee in question regarding this incident is a paraprofessional and while it is true that the staff member remains employed with **Lamar CISD**, it is NOT true that the staff member remains in the same assignment. The employee has been reassigned and no longer works with students."

"When the superintendent, Dr. Nivens, saw the footage, he immediately asked about the status of the current investigation. And, based on what he observed in the video, he felt that a call to CPS was necessary, so he personally filed a report with CPS. In addition, he wanted to be sure that a fair, thorough investigation was conducted, so he hired an external agency to interview all parties involved and report the findings directly to him."

"Initially, the campus principal opened an investigation. Then the HR and the **Special Education** Departments worked together on an investigation. Once the Superintendent was made aware of the concerns, he commissioned a third-party investigation and made a CPS report. While I can't share many details regarding the investigation, I can share that it was concluded that, "None of the evidence in the record demonstrates that [the student] was the victim of abuse or neglect or unlawful discrimination." In addition, CPS did not feel that there was need for their involvement."

When asked if any protocols have since changed, the district said"

"Yes, this room cannot be used for calm-down or sensory until cameras have been added to this area. The door has been removed. The following guidance has been provided regarding the use of the room."

"Students now have to go to this area willingly."

"The area should contain bean bags, weighted blankets, or other inviting items."

"An adult should use positive behavior strategies during the de-escalation process."

The boy's parents said they wanted to share their son's story because it took months to learn what had happened and they hope to protect all students. They also want parents to listen to their children if they show signs that something is wrong at school.

Lauren Talarico on social media: | |

CITATION (CMS STYLE)

Talarico, Lauren. "'They hurt me real bad' | Family claims son with autism mistreated at Texas elementary school - The boy's parents are sharing his story because they said it took months to learn what had happened and they hope to protect all students.." *ABC - 8 WFAA (Dallas, TX)*, March 20, 2023. *NewsBank: Access World News*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.atxlibrary.idm.oclc.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/1906885DEE241A70>.