

# ON DEADLINE

Breaking news and must-read stories

by Doug Stanglin

Media outlets want documents unsealed in Zimmerman case

\$1M lottery winner accused of fraud for using food stamps

Apr 17, 2012

## Kindergartner handcuffed after throwing tantrum at school

Comment Recommend 1k Tweet 137 +1 12

By Douglas Stanglin, USA TODAY

Updated 10h 40m ago



A police officer in a small Georgia town handcuffed a 6-year-old girl who became "unruly" at her elementary school. Police say she had caused damage and injured the principal in his office.

**Update at 5:58 p.m. ET:** The acting police chief in Milledgeville, Ga., has read a brief statement defending the handcuffing of the kindergartner, [WMAZ-TV](#) reports.

Acting Chief Dray Swicord said Salecia Johnson was handcuffed and taken from Creekside Elementary last Friday



### About Doug Stanglin

Doug is an unrepentant news junkie who loves breaking news and has been known to watch C-SPAN even on vacation. He has covered a wide range of domestic and international news stories, from prison riots in Oklahoma to the Moscow coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. Doug previously served as foreign editor at USA TODAY. [More about Doug](#)



### About Michael Winter

Michael Winter has been a daily contributor to On Deadline since its debut in January 2006. His journalism career began in the prehistoric Ink Era, and he was an early adapter at the dawn of the Digital Age. His varied experience includes editing at the *San Jose Mercury News* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

### Fan On Deadline on Facebook

Facebook search bar for USA TODAY On Deadline

Also: Follow On Deadline on Twitter

after she caused damage and injured the principal.

He said an officer was called to the school "to assist with an unruly juvenile who had damaged other students' property, school property, and had injured the principal."

According to the chief, the principal told the officer that Salecia had also run away from school several times.

He said police were called after school officials couldn't reach the girl's parents.

Swicord said the girl was taken in handcuffs to the police station. There, the cuffs were removed and the girl was taken to a meeting room and given something to drink while officers continued trying to reach family.

Swicord said they eventually reached an aunt. The girl was released to the aunt's custody and was not charged because of her age.

The chief said Salecia "was never placed in a holding cell or jail cell and the student's safety was of the utmost importance."

He did not describe the injury to the principal or the damage to the property.

Swicord left after reading his statement and would not answer questions from reporters.

**Original post:** Police in Milledgeville, Ga., say they [handcuffed a 6-year-old kindergartner](#) for safety after she allegedly threw a tantrum at school, tearing items off the principal's wall and upending furniture, WMAZ-TV reports.

According to the police report, the girl also knocked over a shelf, injuring the principal at Creekside Elementary School.

Police say the girl was crying in the principal's office when they arrived, but that she resisted when they tried to calm her, and was cuffed, WMAZ-TV reports.

The child has been charged with simple assault and damage to property.

Police Chief Dray Swicord tells the TV station that police policy is to handcuff any detainee who is taken to the station in a patrol car, regardless of age.

We are not publishing the girl's name because she is a juvenile, but you can read the full story at the [WMAZ website](#).

The girl's father, Earnest Johnson, says he believes the school had "no business calling the police and handcuffing my child."

Police say they tried to contact the girl's mother but were unable to reach her, the TV station reports.

"She has mood swings some days, which all of us had mood swings some days," the girl's mother, Candace Ruff, tells WMAZ. "I guess that was just one of her bad days that day."

**And:** See [raw On Deadline documents on Scribd](#)



#### Advertisement

### Subscribe to On Deadline



Subscribe to On Deadline via RSS

[Subscribe](#)



Sign up for On Deadline e-mail alerts

[Subscribe](#)

Delivered by [FeedBurner](#)

### Blogroll

- [ABC News](#)
- [BBC News in depth](#)
- [Buzzfeed](#)
- [CBS News](#)
- [CNN](#)
- [Drudge Report](#)
- [FARK.com](#)
- [Fox News' On the Scene blog](#)
- [Google News](#)
- [Government Executive's Earlybird](#)
- [Hugh Hewitt](#)
- [Los Angeles Times](#)
- [Memeorandum](#)
- [MSNBC most popular stories](#)
- [National Public Radio](#)
- [Newseum: Today's front pages](#)
- [NPR's The Two-Way](#)
- [Reuters](#)
- [Salon](#)
- [Slate](#)
- [Talking Points Memo](#)
- [Technorati](#)
- [The Daily Dish](#)
- [The Daily Kos](#)
- [The Huffington Post](#)
- [The Lede](#)
- [The New Republic](#)
- [The Plum Line](#)

She has been suspended from school until August, the Associated Press reports.

PREVIOUS

NEXT

« Media outlets want documents unsealed in Zimmerman case

\$1M lottery winner accused of fraud for using food stamps »

To report corrections and clarifications, contact Standards Editor Brent Jones. For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to letters@usatoday.com. Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to corrections.usatoday.com.

USA TODAY is now using Facebook Comments on our stories and blog posts to provide an enhanced user experience. To post a comment, log into Facebook and then "Add" your comment. To report spam or abuse, click the "X" in the upper right corner of the comment box. To find out more, read the FAQ and Conversation Guidelines.

135 comments ▾

Add a comment



Thomas Mc · ★ Top Commenter

Maybe if her parents actually did some parenting, instead of just letting her do whateverthehell she wants, this wouldn't happen.

Reply · 113 · Like · 17 hours ago



Paul E Tooley Sr · ★ Top Commenter · Hagerstown, Maryland

DO NOT ATTACK THESE PARENTS! THAT IS IDIOTIC THINKING!

Reply · 18 · Like · 17 hours ago



Penelope Butera · ★ Top Commenter · Phoenix, Arizona

Paul E Tooley Sr – Sir, this is not normal behavior for a 6 year old – something IS wrong with her – either she needs to be seen by a doctor or her parents have spoiled her beyond belief. Either way her parents ARE to blame – for not getting her treatment or for not getting her the proper level of accountability for her actions. Her mother chalks it up to mood swings – what an idiot.

Reply · 86 · Like · 17 hours ago



Jimmy Ingenluyff · ★ Top Commenter

How could you tell from the video that these parents let the girl do whatever she wants? You can't just make up a story and go with it. You don't really know.

Reply · 18 · Like · 17 hours ago

View 47 more ▾



JanMarie Sajna · Independence, Missouri

They handcuffed her for her own safety. What were they supposed to do? She was out of control, injuring people and property which would have led to her injuring herself. As a teacher, having dealt with similar situations where a child has become 'out of control', having been bitten, scratched, pummeled and kicked by children in the throes of a tantrum, I would have been happy to have them handcuffed. One child's bite gave me severe blood poisoning. This was a child who was severely disturbed, and trying to keep such a child from hurting themselves or others is of primary importance. Resorting to handcuffs is perfectly reasonable in the circumstances. To prevent the child who latched onto my hand with his teeth, from hurting himself or others, I had to hang on to him and not let go while his teeth made their way to by bon...See More

Reply · 76 · Like · 17 hours ago



Tom Phoolery · ★ Top Commenter

Oh stop with the hysteria. You'd be happy to have them handcuffed?? Then youre in the wrong profession. Go back to waitressing. Severe blood poisoning my ass.

Reply · 11 · Like · 16 hours ago



JanMarie Sajna · Independence, Missouri

Tom Phoolery Again, we hear from someone who does not know what they are talking about. Ignorance is such bliss, isn't it Mr. Tom Phoolery ... for it allows you to shoot off your mouth, never understanding nor knowing how truly ignorant you are. What a pity! By the way, notice how I honored you by calling you 'ignorant' instead of 'stupid'. Ignorant, because you have no concept or understanding of a situation like this. it is your choice whether you continue into stupidity. Google the difference before sticking your foot in your mouth again. BTW, the ER doctor who treated the bite on my hand and put me on IV antibiotics told my parents that the human bite is worse than any other, and that there was a good chance I might not survive ... the blood poisoning had reached the lymph

- The Times of London
- The Weekly Standard
- Wall Street Journal
- Yahoo! News top stories