

Dallas girl, 3, sexually assaulted by three boys, cops say

By Allan Turner
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A 3-year-old girl was kidnapped, beaten and sexually assaulted by three boys, ages 7, 8 and 11, authorities said yesterday.

The girl, who was hit with a shoe and a brick, stripped of her clothing and left in a water-filled concrete-lined creek blocks from her home in a gritty west Dallas neighborhood, has been released from the hospital in good condi-

tion. Authorities said the child's body was completely covered with cuts, scratches and bruises.

The boys — two of whom are brothers — underwent psychological testing after their arrest.

The girl's mother told authorities she had left the child in the family van shortly after 6 p.m. on Thursday as she made a telephone call at her home. When she returned to the vehicle minutes later, the child was gone. About two hours later, a passing motorist

found the injured girl walking a few blocks down the street.

Police were called to the Earhart Learning Center on Friday after the 7-year-old reportedly admitted to the attack while being disciplined for an unrelated infraction at the school. Authorities said the boy then implicated his 8-year-old brother and the 11-year-old.

"On a continuum of offenses," police Lt. Bill Walsh told the Dallas Morning News, "this has got to be

among the most horrible. At that age, creek beds should be places to play tag, not commit crimes."

The oldest accused offender has been charged with juvenile delinquency-aggravated sexual assault on a child and is being held at the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Facility. Under Texas sentencing guidelines, he could be detained for 40 years, first in a juvenile facility and then in adult prison.

The brothers, both of whom are too young to be criminally pros-

ecuted under state law, were placed in an emergency shelter by the Dallas office of the Texas Department of Regulatory and Protective Services.

Violent crimes by young offenders — notably the attack at a Jonesboro, Ark., school by 11- and 13-year-old youths — have led some Texas legislators to call for tougher penalties against minors.

State Rep. Jim Pitts, Waxahachie Republican, has called for

lowering the minimum age for eligibility for the death sentence from 16 to 11.

"Very seldom do we run across victims this young," said Detective Joe Canibano, a child exploitation squad officer working on the case. "Very seldom do we find perpetrators who are 7, 8, 11, but it does happen. Any time we deal with a young child who has been violently attacked, it's traumatic. It wears on us."