

EXCLUSIVE: Agency responsible for placing foster children with accused perv who sent kid to foster parent that tortured them



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Matthew Ratajczak/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Judith Leekin, who worked with SCO as a foster parent, abused 11 adopted children in Queens and Florida and used them to line her pockets with \$1 million in stipends she received to help care for them.



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David Westler/For New York Daily News

SCO repeatedly sent children to the home of alleged child molester Cesar Gonzales-Mugaburu, who is believed to have been given more than 140 foster children over nearly two decades from the city, SCO and others.

The nonprofit agency that repeatedly sent kids to accused perv Cesar Gonzales-Mugaburu was previously forced to pay about \$17 million to foster children caged, beaten and tortured by another sick foster parent.

SCO Family of Services, the agency handling placement, and other foster groups paid the millions in 2014 to kids abused by Judith Leekin, 71, court records show.

New York City — which contracted with SCO and was ultimately responsible for the care of the foster children — was forced to pay an additional \$9.7 million to Leekin's victims in a 2012 settlement.

Florida lawyer Howard Talenfeld represented the foster children abused by Leekin.

"This is a tragic story that has repeated itself over and over again in the City of New York," Talenfeld said of the Gonzales-Mugaburu case. "We have seen this because of underfunded monitoring systems, overworked caseworkers with too many cases, and failure of the city to do proper oversight of the nonprofits."



SCO repeatedly sent children to the home of alleged child molester Cesar Gonzales-Mugaburu, who is believed to have been given more than 140 foster children over nearly two decades from the city, SCO and others.

Gonzales-Mugaburu was arrested March 17 on charges of abusing and molesting seven children and having sex with a dog in his Suffolk County home. He is believed to have been

given more than 140 foster children over nearly two decades from the city Administration for Children's Services, SCO and others.

Based in Glen Cove, L.I., SCO operates a \$250 million network of 85 health and human service programs in more than 100 locations serving 60,000 children, youth and families in New York City and Long Island. Executive Director Douglas O'Dell did not return phone calls seeking comment. O'Dell, who has been with SCO for 26 years, assumed the top post when former director Gail Nayowith, stepped down in October 2014. Nayowith declined to comment Tuesday.

In a statement, Chief Strategy Officer Rose Anello said SCO placed one of 10 children involved in the Leekin lawsuit with the monster foster mom in 1986. Leekin adopted that child two years later. "To our knowledge, there was not an investigation into allegations of abuse during that two-year period," Anello said.

A city child welfare official said Tuesday that following the Leekin case in 2007, the city agency "instituted a wide array of safeguards in its oversight of adoption subsidies that remain in place."



Leekin was arrested that year for beating and starving 11 special-needs kids in Laurelton, Queens, and Port St. Lucie, Fla. The kids, born between 1980 and 1990, initially came to her as foster children, whom she adopted and brought to Florida. They are now in their 20s and 30s.

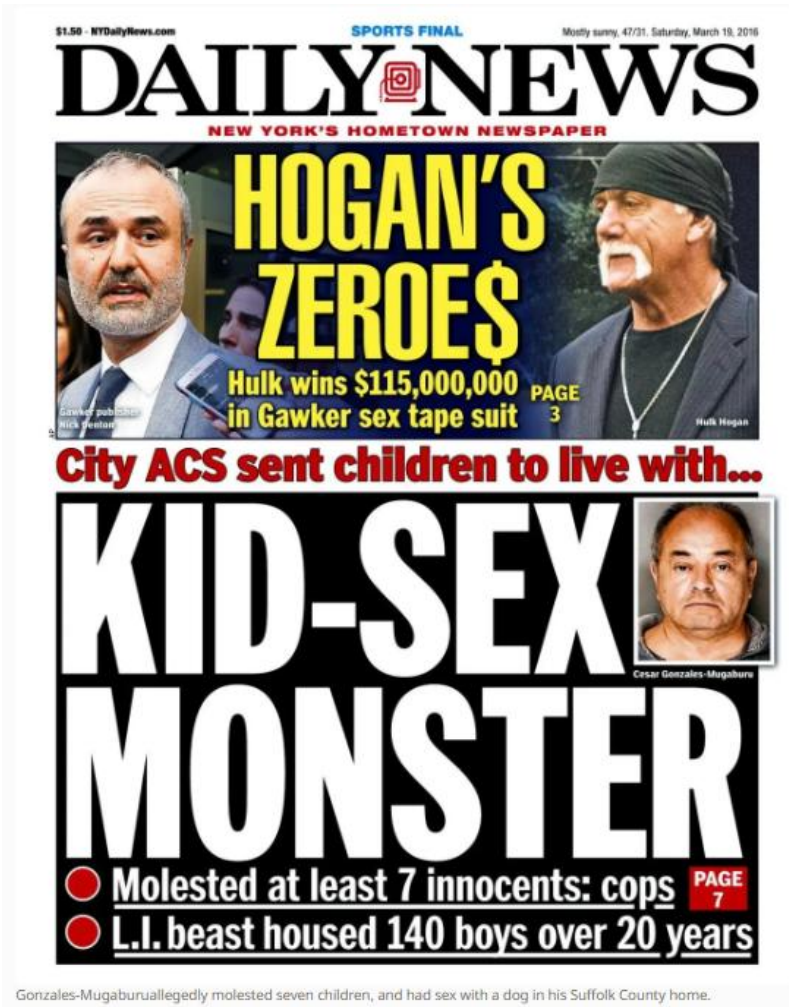
While she was still in Queens, between 1986 and 1996, the city also sent her dozens of other foster kids. The children had different types of developmental disabilities, including blindness and autism, court records show.

Leekin used handcuffs and zip ties on the children, locked them in the basement or the garage of her house, and denied them medical treatment.

She imprisoned them in cribs covered with boards. She beat them with belts. She forced

them to stand for hours, and routinely threatened to shoot them or beat them to death, court records show.

One of the children she adopted, a girl named Mu, disappeared and has never been found, a source said. The child is presumed dead.



2009. The complaint called her home a “house of horrors.”

Leekin hauled in \$1.68 million in subsidies from New York to cover the costs of the children’s care, which was instead used to support her extravagant life. She had a mansion in Port St. Lucie, one other home and a range of luxury cars.

[PERVY L.I. FOSTER PARENT KEPT TERRIFIED KIDS LOCKED IN ROOMS](#)

She was finally caught when one of her adoptive daughters ran away at a supermarket in Sanford, Fla. The girl flagged down police, and an investigation began.

“That child spilled the beans on her,” a source said.

Leekin’s victims filed suit in



A Columbia professor of social work found that half of the children were “totally incapacitated” when they were rescued. Just three could read. ACS, SCO and other agencies failed to adequately keep tabs on Leekin, and failed to investigate the death of a child in her care in 1988, the lawsuit claimed.

L.I. PEDOPHILE PROBED 9 TIMES FOR ABUSING FOSTER KIDS

As part of the settlement, trust funds were created for the continuing care of Leekin’s victims.

Leekin was convicted of aggravated child abuse, and is now in a Florida prison, where she is slated to remain until 2025.

In a statement released late Monday, Anello said SCO is working with ACS to review the Gonzales-Mugaburu case. The agency has hired a risk assessment contractor to assist. SCO has also suspended new intake into the nonkinship foster home program.

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Originally Published: March 30, 2016 at 4:00 AM EDT