

U.S. Mother Featured on TV Says Not Guilty of Abuse

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A U.S. mother shown on an episode of a popular American TV talk show disciplining her adopted Russian son by forcing him to swallow hot sauce and stand in a cold shower pleaded not guilty on Friday to child abuse.

The charge against the mother of six from Anchorage, Jessica Beagley, was based on footage from the daytime "Dr. Phil" show, which aired last fall.

Beagley was charged earlier this month by Anchorage prosecutors, who concluded that her discipline of her 7-year-old boy was "not reasonable."

The "Dr. Phil" video shows Beagley "forcing [the boy] to swish hot sauce in his mouth while yelling in his face and then forcing him to stand confined in a cold shower while she yelled at him," the charging document said.

The boy shown in the video is Daniil Bukharov, who was adopted with his twin brother when they were 5 from an orphanage in the city of Magadan. The Alaska case has prompted protests

from Russian authorities.

Neither Daniil, his brother nor Beagley's four biological children have been removed from the home by the Office of Children's Services, the Anchorage Daily News reported Friday.

Beagley's husband, Gary Beagley, is an Anchorage police officer who specializes in child abuse investigations. He's not under investigation, said police spokesman Dave Parker.

"Ultimately, a jury will have to decide if that's the case," Parker said.

Jessica Beagley was not in court on Friday because she was charged with a misdemeanor instead of a felony and was not required to make an appearance before the judge.

Beagley's lawyer Peter Ramgren told reporters that she is "a loving mother to all of her children, including her two adopted children."

"Although one may disagree with her unorthodox style of discipline, it doesn't rise to the level of child abuse under the statute," he said.

A spokesman for the "Dr. Phil" program declined comment. In the show, host and psychologist Phil McGraw navigates guests through their personal problems.

The "Dr. Phil" episode aired in November and the videotaped disciplining of the boy took place Oct. 21. During her appearance, McGraw told Beagley that her actions were "totally outrageous" and "abusive."

Beagley defended herself on the show by saying she imposed the punishment for the boy's misbehavior at school. She argued that other methods failed to curb the problems.

(Reuters, AP, MT)

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