

Judge sets bail for couple accused in sexual abuse

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A Lauderdale couple accused of sexually abusing an 18-month-old child under their care can leave jail if they can post the \$200,000 bail set for each of them by a Broward Circuit judge on Wednesday.

Beryl and Augustus Danville have been held at the Broward County Jail without bail since their arrest on June 24 at their home in the 4900 block of Northwest 12th Street.

They remained in jail late Wednesday night. The Danvilles each face three counts of sexual battery, which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a minimum of 25 years in prison without parole. They also are being investigated in the abuse of a three-year-old girl, said Neal Dupree, an assistant state attorney.

Judge Robert W. Tyson Jr. set bail at \$200,000 each, prohibited them from having children in their home or visiting children and ordered them to surrender their passports to the court.

The state's investigation began after the mother of the 18-month-old girl discovered blood in the child's diaper, and a pediatrician confirmed the child had been sexually abused.

The incident was referred to the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, which on June closed the day-care program the Danvilles ran at their home.

Friends and relatives gathered for the hearing on Wednesday applauded when Tyson said he would set bail.

But Kenneth Lipman, the Danvilles' attorney, said it was "questionable" the couple could raise that amount.

Tyson listened to Dupree describe the evi-

dence against the couple and then to five of the Danvilles' friends, who testified that the couple would return for their trial.

Christa McElroy, who lives next door to the Danvilles, said they "are the best neighbors I've ever had," and predicted they would stand trial.

The Danvilles moved to Florida about three years ago. Since 1985, they have run a day-care center for about five children.

Lipman told the judge he could have packed the courtroom with 20 people wanting to vouch for the Danvilles.

Lipman also questioned the ability of the state's major witness, a girl younger than 3 years old, to testify.

Dupree countered that three children who stayed in the Danvilles' home show physical signs of sexual abuse.