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## Father ordered to pay damages to boys abused by son

By RENÉE C. LEE  
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CONROE — In an unusual twist, a Montgomery County jury ordered a father to pay punitive damages to four boys who were sexually abused by his son who is now in prison.

The jury awarded the boys \$8 million.

Harold Newsom will have to pay 20 percent if the judgement made Wednesday is affirmed by Judge Mary Ann Turner of the Montgomery County Court at Law No. 4. His son, Jason Newsom, will be responsible for the rest.

Jurors found Jason Newsom liable for assaulting and intentionally inflicting emotional distress on the boys and found Harold Newsom liable for endangering the boys.

The plaintiffs' attorney, Joe Stephens, presented evidence during the eight-day trial that showed Harold Newsom, also known as Hal, knew his son molested children but did not warn the parents or tell authorities.

In legal terms, that's negligence per se, a criminal act that placed the boys in imminent danger of death or bodily injury, or physical or mental impairment, Stephens said.

Montgomery County District Attorney Michael

McDougal could not be reached for comment.

"Hal had a long history and knowledge of his son's behavior and kept it secret for his own advantage," Stephens said. "He didn't want his name destroyed."

Hal Newsom's attorney, Judy Mingledorff, said she will file an appeal. State law says parents are not responsible for the criminal actions of an adult child, she said.

"All case law says that," Mingledorff said.

The boys' families declined through their attorney to comment on the case.

Jason Newsom's attorney, Dominick Derose, could not be reached for comment on Thursday.

The four boys accused Jason Newsom of sexually abusing them from 2004 to 2006. Three of them were 9 years old when the abuse started and the other was 14.

Jason Newsom, 36, of New Caney, used his wildlife reserve and hunting businesses to lure the boys and gain the trust of their parents, prosecutors said.

Jason Newsom accepted a plea bargain and pleaded guilty to three counts of aggravated sexual assault of a child and one count of sexual assault of a child in January 2007.

He received 20 years on each charge and is serving them concurrently in the Wynne Unit in Huntsville.

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During the civil trial, Stephens told jurors that Hal Newsom knew his son was a child molester since Jason Newsom was 17. Hal Newsom's ex-wife signed a statement that accused the then-teenager of sexually abusing his stepbrothers, then 5 and 10. The couple put Jason Newsom in counseling for six months, Stephens said.

The father later set Jason Newsom up with a petting zoo business. He also supported his son's wildlife reserve and hunting businesses and the two shared a bow fishing business, Stephens said.

Hal Newsom saw his son with many young boys and saw him take the boys to his ranch late at night after hunting and fishing trips, Stephens told jurors.

Mingledorff argued that her client did not have a duty to tell the victims' parents about his son's criminal activities. She also said that Jason Newsom had told the parents that he had been accused of child molestation.

*renee.lee@chron.com*

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