



Archdiocese of Santa Fe
**Office of Communications/
Social Media**
4000 Saint Joseph Place NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120-1714
Leslie M. Radigan, Director
Voice 505.831.8180, FAX 505.831.8248
lradigan@archdiosf.org, www.archdiosf.org

Chronology of Events Concerning Incident at Santo Niño Regional Catholic School in Santa Fe, New Mexico

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2021--There is much speculation and misinformation concerning events surrounding an April 2021 incident concerning Robert Apodaca, who was employed at Santo Niño Regional Catholic School in Santa Fe.

Below is a timeline of the events surrounding the incident. Sources are interviews with involved personnel and documentary evidence.

August 2019

Robert Apodaca was hired as a school nurse after a criminal background check completed by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe (ASF) indicated a record clear of any charges. Another background check was conducted by CYFD on May 19, 2020 (delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic) in which results showed no indication of criminal activity. Earlier background checks by the Santa Fe Public Schools had also been shown no criminal activity.

Friday, April 23, 2021

- In an after-school group, Robert Apodaca (RA) was found by a staff member with several students around his desk as they watched a movie on his laptop. The door appeared to be locked, but the door had been problematic previously and was pending repair. A child opened the door when staff member knocked. The staff member “thought” she saw a child on RA’s lap. The staff member witnessed no indications of sexual abuse. However, both the lights being off and child on lap is against school and ASF policy.

Monday, April 26, 2021

- The staff member reports incident to principal. The staff member did not know the name of the child. RA was not scheduled to return to campus until Wednesday, April 28, 2021.
- Principal informs ASF Superintendent and Archdiocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) of incident.

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

- When RA arrives, principal questions him as to identity of the child. Parent is notified, and child is brought in to confirm that RA was the adult involved in the incident. Child answered “no” to principal’s questions about whether RA touched him inappropriately.
- Principal places RA on immediate administrative leave pending further investigation.
- Principal schedules VAC to come early Thursday, April 29, 2021 to continue investigation and draft report.
- At this point there was NO indication of abuse.

Thursday, April 29, 2021

- State police officer arrives to Santo Niño to investigate because the child's parent had reported the incident. VAC arrives just after. Officer talked to staff, but declined to speak to RA or child, saying that there would be a follow-up "safehouse interview" of child if it was deemed necessary by police higher supervisors. Police officer also found **NO** evidence of criminal activity or abuse, but rather only a school policy violation.

Note:

- Once law enforcement is involved, ASF investigation is suspended so as to not interfere with any possible investigations of law enforcement.
- Santo Niño awaited further instructions from law enforcement.

July 2021: Per *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper reports, a criminal complaint was filed against RA and an arrest warrant was issued for alleged criminal sexual contact with a minor (not related to the Santo Nino incident).

Some important points:

- At NO time after the incident was reported was Robert Apodaca in contact with children; he was immediately isolated from them at the school pending investigation.
- The principal attests adamantly that she was not "ordered" to not report the incident as was reported in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. This is likely a lack of clarity in communicating with the investigating officer.
- As the officer reported, there was no crime evident. Also, the principal had already informed the parent of the incident just after she received the initial report.

Lessons learned:

- Increase proactive communication and coordination with police about when/what to report to parents and community without interfering in ongoing investigations. Do not wait for such information to be "pushed" to the schools or archdiocese.
- Provide counselors at earliest opportunity allowed by law enforcement to conduct "safehouse interviews" of children who had been in contact with someone who violates child protection policies.

Contrary to what some have alleged, there was—and is—no attempt at "hiding" child sexual abuse incidents by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and its schools. Tragic history has starkly shown the futility of criminal attempts to do so in the past. It is to great advantage to all organizations and society only to root out child sexual abuse in wherever it is found so that no child (or parent/guardian) need ever suffer such pain again. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe and its schools are absolutely committed to this goal.--END