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NYC Daycare Workers Face Abuse Charges

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New York City is reeling from disturbing accusations of child abuse at a prominent Manhattan daycare, Bright Horizons.

Three employees, Evelyn Vargas, Shakia Henley, and Latia Townes, are facing charges including child endangerment, with Vargas facing additional counts of assault, following alleged incidents involving at least nine toddlers, all between the ages of one and two. The Manhattan District Attorney's Office has confirmed the arrests, shedding light on a deeply troubling situation that has left parents understandably distressed.

The allegations paint a grim picture of the conditions some of these vulnerable children endured. Evelyn Vargas, aged 47, is accused of some of the most egregious acts. In one chilling incident in January, she allegedly taped a toddler's mouth from "ear to ear" with packing tape, obstructing the child's breathing until the toddler turned red and cried.

Vargas is also accused of dragging a toddler by her hair, causing pain, and repeatedly dragging at least three different toddlers by their arms between September 2023 and February of this year. Further accusations against Vargas include force-feeding two children ginger shots, stuffing their mouths with tissue, and restraining them to chairs on multiple occasions. She faces nine counts of endangering the welfare of a child, four counts of attempted assault, one count of strangulation, and one count of assault. Her lawyer has declined to comment on the charges.

Disturbing Details

The accusations extend beyond Vargas. Latia Townes, 23, is charged with hitting three toddlers in the head with a metal bottle on several occasions between October 2024 and January 2025. Meanwhile, Shakia Henley, 36, is accused of spraying a toddler in the face with a bottle containing a mixture of soap and bleach between January and February of this year. Henley, who is charged with one count of child endangerment, will be pleading not guilty, according to her lawyer. Townes' attorney was not immediately available for comment.

The safety and well-being of children in daycare facilities are paramount, and these allegations have rightly sparked serious concern among the community. Bright Horizons at Columbus Circle has not yet responded to requests for comment, leaving many questions unanswered about the measures in place to protect the children under their care.

This case serves as a stark reminder for parents to remain vigilant and for childcare providers to uphold the highest safety and supervision standards.

Anyone who suspects child abuse is urged to contact the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-Child or 1-800-422-4453, or visit www.childhelp.org. The hotline provides toll-free and confidential assistance 24/7 in over 170 languages.