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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **STEVEN DOUGHERTY CHARGED WITH AGGRAVATED ASSAULT, EWOC IN ABUSE OF GIRLFRIEND'S 5-YEAR-OLD SON**



**STEVEN DOUGHERTY**

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (July 21, 2022) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Lower Pottsgrove Township Police Chief Richard Bell announce the arrest of Steven J. Dougherty, 31, Collingdale, on felony charges related to the physical abuse of his girlfriend's 5-year-old son.

On Nov. 19, 2021, the Montgomery County Detective Bureau was contacted to assist with an investigation into suspected physical abuse of a 6-year-old boy, who was hospitalized at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). An examination by CHOP child abuse experts found injuries to the boy's penis and scrotum; significant bruising and abrasions on the boy's abdomen, chest, eyelids, arms and legs; and multiple bilateral rib fractures involving 14 ribs.

The ensuing joint investigation by Montgomery County Detectives and Lower Pottsgrove Police found that the boy's school had made a Childline referral on Nov. 18, 2021, after the boy arrived at school with pain in his groin area so severe that he had to be carried to the school nurse's office. The nurse found that the boy's penis and testicles were enlarged, red/purple in color and was "oozing a yellow color." He also had dried blood on his leg as well as bruising on his back. The boy reported at

the time that his mother's boyfriend "is a big, mean bully" and had bought him sneakers as an "I'm sorry gift." The boy's mother, Emily Laster, was called and told to take her son to the emergency room.

The investigation also found that two days prior on Nov. 16, 2021, a 911 caller reported to Tredyffrin Township Police that the boy had climbed into her car and hid in the backseat in an attempt to get away from Dougherty while he was inside a gas station. The man, later identified by police as Dougherty after he left his ID behind, got into the 911 caller's car and pulled the boy from the vehicle, then left the gas station. The 911 caller and another witness reported to police that the boy said the man he was with was "trying to cut my pee-pee off and kill me."

Detectives found that the child had been seen previously at CHOP in June 2021, brought in by the boy's grandparents, who were concerned about his vomiting and diarrhea. The boy said fecal matter had been smeared on him by his mom's boyfriend. However, Laster said the boy had had an accident and some fecal matter may have unintentionally been transferred on his face from a towel. The grandparents also made a report to police on Oct. 28, 2021, after seeing marks on the boy's face and the child had told them "Steven" held his face under water trying to drown him.

On Nov. 19, 2021, following the determination by CHOP child abuse experts, the Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth implemented a safety plan for the boy, removing him from his mother's home. The plan, approved by the court, prohibits contact by his mother and "any recent past caregivers."

"This is a very disturbing case of physical abuse of a young child by the defendant," said Steele. "Thankfully, the boy is now doing well in the care of other family members."

Dougherty was arrested on July 20, 2022, and was charged with Aggravated Assault of a Child Under 6, Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Duty of Care), Simple Assault and Recklessly Endangering Another Person. He was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Albert J. Augustine, who set bail at \$10,000. The defendant posted bail and was released.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

*CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.*