

Malakov girl needs family's help: Expert

Child psychologist at NYU says children are resilient in the face of trauma when relatives are supportive

BY IVAN PEREIRA

The 5-year-old girl who saw her father gunned down in a Forest Hills playground more than 10 months ago in a hit allegedly arranged by her mother will need the help of her entire family if she ever wants to live a normal life, a child psychologist said.

Prosecutors contend Dr. Mazoltuv Borukhova had her estranged husband Dr. Daniel Malakov killed Oct. 28, 2007, because he had won custody of their daughter, Michelle Malakov, six days prior to the shooting and she wanted to get revenge.

Dr. Marylène Cloitre, director of the Institute of Trauma and Resilience at New York University, said she has seen many children pull through various traumatic experiences and the main factor was not drugs or therapy, but family.

"We don't know how she'll do in the long run. It depends on how she's told about what happens," Cloitre said.

The psychologist, who has treated children who have lost parents by incar-



A child trauma specialist says the parents (l.) of slain Forest Hills dentist Daniel Malakov and the rest of his family and the relatives of his accused killer, his ex-wife Mazoltuv Borukhova (bottom r.), will have to be open and honest with his daughter Michelle, (top r.) seen here with Malakov hours before he was shot.

ceration, murder and war, pointed out that this case is unique because the girl

is believed to have been the center and motivation behind the slaying. The

problem is compounded by the fact that both sides of her family had been at

odds for years.

"Over time, she might reflect that it's her fault.



Left Photo by Ellis Kaplan

I think the family should be very protective and tell her that your mother and father being angry had nothing to do with you," she said.

Prosecutors claim the 34-year-old Uzbek woman hired her distant uncle, Mikhail Mallyayev, to come to the Annadale Playground to kill Malakov, also 34, and an Uzbek immigrant. Mallyayev, 51, was arrested three weeks later and Borukhova was picked up by police in February.

Both were indicted relative on first-degree murder and conspiracy charges and were scheduled to attend pre-trial hearings Wednesday in Queens Supreme Court. Their joint trial is slated for sometime later this year and if convicted, both face up to life in prison without parole.

Cloitre said the best way to counter the psychological repercussions of Malakov's murder was to have both of Michelle's families play a role in her development. The psychologist said that reassured sense of welcomeness will reinforce the fact that she did nothing wrong and

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Malakov

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that people love her.

"I think it's very important for children that they're united," she said. "It may be difficult for them, but it is in the best interest of the child."

Cloitre said Michelle's family would have to repeatedly talk about the murder and her mother's arrest as she grows up. Children view traumatic events differently as they age, and with some planning from child service experts, the psychologist said her paternal relatives, who currently have custody of the girl, can help her out.

Despite her criticism of Borukhova, Cloitre said it was paramount for Michelle to know that her mother was in jail because it would help her understand the complicated situation.

"My experience is that they continue to see their parent as human and remain attached to them. Children still love their parent even if they are in jail," the psychologist said.

Even before the murder, tensions between the Malakovs and Borukhovas had been far from amicable and had become worse after the murder.

Gavril Malakov, Dan-

iel's younger brother and the girl's current foster parent, recalled how he was physically assaulted by the Borukhova matriarch, Esta, when Michelle was transferred to his brother's custody. During the various court proceedings following the arrests, both groups engaged in loud, testy arguments that were broken up by court officers.

Borukhova's sister, Natella Natanova, was arrested on charges in March that she allegedly threatened Gavril Malakov on the street near his Forest Hills home, but she was acquitted in July.

Neither the Malakov nor Borukhova family was reachable for comment.

Cloitre pointed out that as Michelle grows up, she could find relief from her peers if her family situation remains hostile. Those friends, along with other forms of support, such as teachers and counselors, could be the most objective outlet to help her overcome her family tragedy, according to the child psychologist.

"I think she'll pull through. Children are resilient," she said. "She'll need help on how to deal with this situation, but there should be enough people around to give good advice."