

Alleged victim of former priest might testify

Author(s): Garrett Ordower Daily Herald Staff Writer
Date: April 1, 2004
Page: 3
Section: News

In order to show a pattern of sexual abuse and propensity toward committing such crimes, testimony from the second alleged victim of former priest Mark **Campobello** might be allowed at his first trial.

But by mutual agreement of the defense and prosecution, evidence about how the Rockford Diocese handled **Campobello** will not be heard at the May trial.

"The people are attempting to try two cases in one," **Campobello's** lawyer Paul Gaziano told Judge Timothy Sheldon Wednesday morning.

But according to Illinois law, Assistant State's Attorney Jody Gleason said, evidence that **Campobello** "singled out" two girls and abused them within a matter of months can be heard at trial.

Normally, the law doesn't allow evidence to be brought up at trial that isn't related to the specific charges being tried because it would be unfairly prejudicial.

But in 1998, Illinois passed a law making an exception for sex crimes because of the propensity of sex offenders to repeat their offenses, Gleason said.

Campobello, 39, became involved with a 14-year-old girl in eighth grade at St. Peter's school in Geneva from January to April 1999 while living there and working at Mooseheart, Gleason said, then at the start of the next school year, he started a relationship with a 15-year-old girl who was a sophomore at Aurora Central Catholic High School.

In both cases, Gleason said, the priest "singled out" the girls and started relationships with them.

"It's similar conduct with victims who are in a similar situation," Gleason said. "This particular case is exactly what (the law) was designed for."

Campobello faces charges stemming from both relationships, but the trial scheduled to start in May will be for five counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse and five counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault involving the Geneva student. Gleason wants the Aurora Central student to testify at the first trial, before he faces trial for three counts of criminal sexual abuse related to her.

But **Campobello's** lawyers argued that what happened after the allegations being tried in the current case couldn't "logically" be relevant to what happened before them.

"I believe you have a very strong argument," Sheldon said. "But it looks as though the General Assembly and the courts take a different view."

Sheldon said he will read the cases and apply the rules of the statute to reach a decision, which he will present at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday.

According to the law, the court can take into account the time between offenses, the degree of factual similarity and other relevant facts in deciding whether the value of the evidence would unfairly bias jurors.

In two separate decisions in April 2003, one from the First District Appellate Court held in *People v. Childress*, and another from the State Supreme Court in *People v. Donoho*, the courts found that the law allows evidence of other crimes at trial in sex crimes cases.

© Copyright Daily Herald, Paddock Publications, Inc.

[Click here to go back.](#)