

## County judge continues review of diocese's sexual abuse files

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A Kane County judge said he needs more time to decide whether the personnel files of Catholic priests accused of sexual misconduct are relevant to the civil trial of a Geneva priest.

An attorney for two girls abused as teens by former Geneva priest Mark Campobello said he needs the files to prove the Rockford Catholic Diocese had a pattern of transferring, ignoring or poorly investigating allegations of employee abuse.

Without the files or more victims coming forward, attorney Keith Aeschliman said it's impossible to refute church statements that the diocese kept its investigations above board and quickly reported abuse to civil authorities.

Judge F. Keith Brown said Thursday he has only made it about one-third of the way through the box of files about sex abuse allegations between 1991 and 2002. He expects to finish reviewing the files and comparing their investigations to church policy guidelines by Sept. 29.

So far, none of the files mentions transfers of priests or any cases where nothing was done about a complaint, Brown said.

In some cases, the complaints were referred to other dioceses. In some cases, the victim refused to cooperate with the investigation. In some cases, the accused were not involved with the diocese. Attorneys for the Rockford Catholic Diocese declined to specify how many employee files were at issue or whether abuse allegations were eventually proven.

Aeschliman argued that the level of investigation could help make his case that the diocese, or members of St. Peter Church in Geneva and Aurora Central Catholic High School, where the girls were abused, failed to follow up on abuse allegations until Campobello was arrested in December 2002. He admitted to the abuse in a criminal case in 2004 and is serving an eight-year prison sentence.

Diocese attorneys contend that the only files relevant to the Campobello trial are his own personnel records, not those of other accused priests.

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