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Youth minister charged with sex assault of teen

Friday, June 29, 2012

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June 29, 2012 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- A youth minister is charged with sexually assaulting a 14-year old girl. On Friday, her family filed a civil lawsuit against the man.

The girl was 14 at the time the alleged assaults began. Her family says they brought their concerns to the church and were assured it was not a problem.

The suspect, Seth Butler, is due in court Monday to face criminal charges for the alleged sexual assault of a minor. He is expected to plead guilty.

Butler worked as a youth minister at the New Jerusalem temple on the far South Side. The church is relatively small with about 100 members. But the girl's parents say they felt comfortable encouraging their children to spend time there rather than the streets. That, they say, turned out to be a mistake, as the 22-year-old youth pastor began taking a special interest in their daughter - an interest they say that turned sexual.

"I don't feel that the church did enough to protect us," said Derryl Shelton, the girl's father. "I thought my children would be safe in the house of god."

"At some point, he was able to charm her, and now she realizes that it was all a ploy to simply sexually assault her," said her attorney, Paul Wolf.

Police arrested Butler, eventually charging him with aggravated sexual assault of a minor. The police report outlines some of the allegations: "Victim stated offender began kissing her then taking off her clothes. Victim stated they engaged in sexual intercourse."

The family has filed a civil lawsuit against the youth pastor, the church, and the minister of the church, whom they allege knew about the crimes and failed to stop them. They allege some of the assaults happened in a basement apartment Butler lived in that was owned by the church minister, and they say it continued for quite some time.

"This happened over a year to two-year period, and the amount of sexual relations that occurred were in the area of 30 to 40 times," said Wolf.

The victim is the 7th youngest of ten children. Since they learned of the alleged assaults, the family has left the church.

"I'm hurt because I trusted - I trusted the church, I trusted the people, I trusted the pastor... I loved them like a family, and for this to happen, I'm devastated," said Valerie Shelton, the victim's mother.

ABC7 attempted to reach the minister of the New Jerusalem church but was unsuccessful. ABC7 did speak briefly with Butler's defense attorney, but he declined to comment.

In their lawsuit, the family is asking for damages of at least \$50,000, which is typical in cases like this one.

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