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Boy Abused by Priest Seeing Psychologist at Diocese Expense

By Charles Miller
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A 14-year-old boy who said he hasn't been able to sleep since he was sexually abused by his priest and Boy Scout leader is receiving psychological treatment paid for by the Syracuse Catholic Diocese.

"They said, 'Go to this doctor and don't worry about paying for it,' " the boy's mother said. "I don't think it's done any good whatsoever. In fact, I think it's done more bad than good."

The priest also is undergoing treatment. The Rev. Donald C. Hebert, formerly of Most Holy Rosary Church, is at St. Luke's Institute, a Catholic psychiatric hospital in Suitland, Md. He said he checked into the hospital after apologizing to the family for fondling the boy during an overnight stay at a camp in Parish.

The Rev. Jeffrey Keefe, a clinical psychologist who works for the diocese, went with Hebert to apologize to the boy and his family last month. He said the diocese is paying for the boy's sessions with Dr. Dennis L. Bogin, a Syracuse psychologist.

It was after one of those sessions that Bogin told police the boy might also have been abused by his Boy Scout leader, Robert G. Prior, 67, of 1510 Stolp Ave. Prior was charged last week with sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child.

In a statement to police, the boy said he was molested by the scout leader last month in Syracuse and by the priest, who coordinated diocesan activities with the Scouts, a week later.

"I wanted to grab his keys and drive away and get the police," the teen-ager said Saturday. "I just want to forget about what happened, but it's really hard. I can't get it out of my mind; I can't even sleep at night."

Prior has been involved with the Boy Scout troop for 27 years, 18 years as troop's Scoutmaster. He said he would resign from Scouting because of the arrest.

He told police he has touched several boys over the years, and admitted two incidents with the teen-ager.

The charges did not surprise Police Sgt. Timothy Erwin, who arrested Prior. Erwin was in Prior's troop 25 years ago.

While Prior was a "wonderful Scout leader and person," children often suspected him of sexual misconduct, Erwin said.

"Nobody wanted Mr. Prior to come into the tent to tuck you in," he said after handling the criminal case against his former Scout leader. "He was always tickling us and doing some peculiar things. "

Westhill School officials on Friday suspended Prior from his busdriving job.

The boy's parents said they hope others will go to police if they have been sexually abused by Prior. Erwin said such incidents should be reported to the department's youth division.

The Rev. Michael Carmola, vicar for the diocese priest personnel, would not say whether the Diocese is investigating other incidents involving Hebert.

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