

## TOP NEWS

# 6 charged in New Hampshire youth detention center sex abuse probe

By Associated Press • April 7, 2021

CONCORD, N.H. >> Six former staffers at New Hampshire's state-run youth detention center were arrested today in connection with the abuse of 11 children over the course of a decade, including one who continued working with children for nearly 20 years after he is accused of holding a boy down while colleagues raped him.

The Sununu Youth Services Center, formerly known as the Youth Development Center, has been under investigation since July 2019, when two former counselors were charged with raping a teenage boy 82 times in the 1990s.

Those charges were dropped last year in order to strengthen the expanded investigation, but both men were arrested again today and charged with rape, the attorney general's office said. Two others also were charged with rape, while other two were charged with being accomplices to rape. The allegations span from 1994 to 2005.

The attorney general's office didn't comment on the possibility of further arrests, but said the latest developments were "merely a step forward" and that the investigation will continue.

"Today's arrests make clear that this administration is committed to holding these perpetrators accountable for their detestable actions," said Gov. Chris Sununu. "This is not over, and we will continue to investigate these horrific allegations."


The center is named for former Gov. John H. Sununu, father of the current governor.

Several of those arrested today were previously named in a civil lawsuit filed last year in which more than 200 men and women allege they were physically or sexually abused as children by 150 staffers at the Manchester facility from 1963 to 2018. According to their attorney, children were gang raped by counselors, beaten while raped, forced to compete for food in "fight clubs" set up by counselors and locked in solitary confinement for weeks or months.

"My clients are thrilled that the state has taken the important next step in holding these men criminally responsible for the unspeakable crimes they have committed," attorney Rus Rilee said. "We have faith that this is just the beginning of the arrests and indictments of not only all of the perpetrators, but also all of those that allowed it to happen."

The new arrestees include Lucien Poulette, 65, of Auburn, who is charged with 33 counts — including rape and sexual assault — involving seven victims between 1994 and 2005. Bradley Asbury, 66, of Dunbarton, is charged with being an accomplice to the rape of a former resident between 1997 and 1998. And Frank Davis, 79, of Hopkinton, is charged with one count of rape and five counts of sexual assault involving two victims between 1996 and 1997.

Instead of the dozens of charges they previously faced, Jeffrey Buskey, 54, of Quincy, Massachusetts, is now charged with five counts of rape involving four children between 1996 and 1999, while Stephen Murphy, 51, of Danvers,

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James Woodlock, 56, of Manchester, was charged with three counts of being an accomplice to rape between 1997 and 1998. David Meehan, the lead plaintiff in the civil lawsuit, alleges that Woodlock repeatedly beat him, held him down while Buskey raped him and told him he had “simply misunderstood events” when he spoke up during a group counseling session.



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Woodlock later left the Youth Development Center job and became a juvenile probation and parole officer, a position he held until he went out on leave in 2017. He declined to comment on Meehan's allegations when a reporter visited his home in early 2020.

The New Hampshire men are expected to appear in court Thursday, while authorities seek extradition from Massachusetts for Buskey and Murphy. Messages were left for their lawyers today; it was unclear whether the others are represented by attorneys.

In 2000 and 2001, the state Division of Children, Youth and Families spent seven months investigating 25 complaints of physical abuse and neglect at the center, including a boy who said he lost the tip of his finger when staff members slammed a door on it and others who accused staff members of wrapping boys' heads in towels and slamming them against pool tables. It concluded teens had been abused in five of the cases.

A newspaper article published during that investigation quoted Brad Asbury, then head of the state employees union chapter at the youth center, as saying the allegations were offensive.

“We take them personally,” Asbury said. “That stuff does not take place. It's not tolerated. We don't have time to abuse them.”



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