

Father Charged With Abusing Four Daughters

Original document found online at: http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1988-12-06/news/8803100743_1_sexual-battery-five-girls-daughters

December 6, 1988 | By KEVIN DAVIS, Staff Writer

POMPANO BEACH -- A father of seven, described as a church-going man who worked hard to provide for his family, has been arrested on charges of sexually abusing four of his five daughters, including one who had an abortion two years ago when she was 10, police said on Monday.

“You don’t think anyone is capable of doing this to their children,” said Pompano Beach Detective Ken Kleiss, who began looking into the case on Saturday. “I was shocked.”

Police said the physician who performed the abortion two years ago failed to report it to the authorities -- a violation of state law if he suspected the child was abused. Police said on Monday they did not know the physician’s name.

“I don’t understand why it was never reported,” Kleiss said.

The 29-year-old father, who works in a warehouse, was charged with four counts of sexual battery on a child under 12 years old and one count of sexual battery. He was being held without bail on Monday at the Broward County Jail.

If convicted, he could face life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years.

At various times over the past two years, police said, the father had sexual relations with the girl who became pregnant, and with three other daughters age 10 and under.

The mother, 26, was aware of some, but not all of the activity, police said.

“This is basically a family that goes to church together all the time. On the surface you wouldn’t suspect anything,” Kleiss said. “As far as they could tell there was no previous investigation in that household.”

The children were turned over to the custody of their grandparents after the arrest. The mother has not been charged.

The father was charged after bringing his 12-year-old daughter to the emergency room of North Beach Hospital on Saturday because of an injury she suffered while she was sexually assaulted, police said.

Hospital officials, after examining the girl, contacted the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and the police, who went to the family's home and began questioning the father.

HRS officials and police said they found the mother in the yard putting the seven children -- five girls and two boys -- into the family station wagon. The mother, police said, agreed to take all seven children to the Sexual Assault Treatment Center in Fort Lauderdale, where it was determined that all five girls -- ages 12, 10, 8, 7 and 3 -- had been sexually abused.

The father was not charged with abuse of the 3-year-old, who was unable to give a statement to police. The boys, 4 and 5, were not abused, police said.

Police said they began interviewing the children, and the story of sexual abuse began to unravel. The 12-year-old told investigators that she had been sexually active with her father for the past two years. Police said she told them she had an abortion after she became pregnant two years ago.

According to a police report, the mother did not tell the doctor who performed the abortion that the girl was impregnated by her father. Police said the mother told them she knew the father was responsible.

Kleiss said he asked the mother who the doctor was, and she told him she could not remember the name but could take him to the abortion clinic on Sample Road.

``She drove with me to show me where it was. It looked vacant,`` Kleiss said.

Police did not disclose the exact location of the clinic.

Joanne Richter, director of the Sexual Assault Treatment Center in Fort Lauderdale, said physicians, as well as other professionals, are obligated legally and ethically to report suspected abuse to HRS. Many do not, she said.

Richter said in cases of incestuous relationships, the children often fear telling anyone outside the family.

``Most of the offenders play on the child's fear,`` she said. ``A lot of these children think they've done something wrong.``

If a physician performed an abortion on the girl, Richter said, ``there's no doubt in my mind`` that he should have suspected something was wrong or that there had been some abuse.

Sexual assault of children, even by their relatives or parents, is not uncommon, she said. Center officials see about 110 children each month.

“Many of our cases are incest cases,” she said.

Larry Kranort, district legal counsel for HRS, said the physician who performed the abortion was obligated by law to report the case to HRS if he suspected abuse. It would be unusual for the doctor not to suspect something was wrong when performing an abortion on a 10-year-old, he said.

“The key is what the mother and daughter told the doctor,” he said.

Violation of the law is a second-degree misdemeanor, punishable by no more than 60 days in prison and a fine up to \$500.