

**COURTS & CORRECTIONS**

# Dozens Allege Sexual and Physical Abuse at NH's Juvenile Detention Facility

 By Nancy West  January 12, 2020



*DHHS website photo*

John H. Sununu Youth Services Center in Manchester, formerly known as the Youth Development Center.

By **NANCY WEST, InDepthNH.org**

**CONCORD** – A class action lawsuit has been filed against the state claiming dozens of youths suffered physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and solitary confinement while incarcerated at New Hampshire's juvenile detention facility.

The suit claims youths suffered the abuse at the hands of workers while in the state's care from 1982 to 2014 at Sununu Youth Services Center in Manchester. It was formerly known as the Youth Development Center (YDC) for delinquent youths between the ages of 11 and 17.

The lawsuit filed by Rilee and Associates says it represents 36 individuals so far.

"These horrific acts of abuse were perpetrated by the very individuals who were legally responsible for providing protection, care, guidance, rehabilitative, educational and other services to children who had been committed to YDC pursuant to RSA 621," the lawsuit states.

The children were deliberately intimidated and manipulated into believing that they had no recourse and that no one would believe them, the lawsuit said.

"Even when these children, sporting black eyes, swollen faces, and bleeding genitals, sought help from YDC staff, they were informed that they were mistaken and that the abuse had not occurred.

"As a consequence, when they finally left YDC and were released into society, these juveniles had not only been terrorized into keeping quiet and hiding the horrific years of physical violence and sexual torture to which they had been subjected, but they had also

been stripped of any ability to obtain gainful employment, become functioning members of society, and live normal lives,” according to the lawsuit.

Attorney Rus Rilee told the Associated Press that boys and girls were victimized. “The people that were in charge knew what was going on, and they covered it up,” Rilee told AP.

The Department of Health and Human Services has oversight over SYSC and is named in the suit along with a half dozen people who worked at the facility. Two of the men, Jeffrey Buskey and Stephen Murphy, were indicted last July for allegedly raping a teenage boy at YDC in the late 1990s, who is now the plaintiff in the lawsuit.

The suit was filed Saturday in Merrimack County Superior Court in Concord.

The criminal investigation that resulted from the Buskey and Murphy allegations is still under investigation by the Attorney General’s Office.

The new lawsuit says the lead plaintiff was sent to YDC for running away from home starting when he was in the fifth grade to escape an abusive environment and was often homeless. He eventually committed burglaries to get food and shelter and was committed to YDC in 1995 when he was 14.

The lawsuit details horrific abuse of the lead plaintiff who was allegedly infected with gonorrhea at age 15 the first time he was raped at YDC and later was beaten and raped on a regular basis, according to the lawsuit.

“This lawsuit seeks to hold the State of New Hampshire and others responsible for the lives they forever destroyed and to bring about systemic change so that this can never happen again to another child in New Hampshire,” the lawsuit states.

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