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Diocese of Norwich and sex abuse victims struggle to reach settlement

Sex abuse victims and the Diocese of Norwich are struggling to reach a settlement.

By [Luke Hajdasz](#) and [Zoe Strothers](#)

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NORWICH, Conn. (WFSB) - Sex abuse victims and the Diocese of Norwich are struggling to reach a settlement.

There are a total of 146 victims involved in the settlement.

An agreement was reached a few months back that is now off the table, and how things shake out from here is up in the air.

“It’s hard as a grown man to talk about this,” Victim 1 said.

The victim, who asked to remain anonymous, says he was abused as a teenager at Mount Saint John School in Deep River.

Years later, it’s still hard to talk about.

“They want closure,” said Kelly Reardon, Reardon Law Firm.

Attorney Kelly Reardon represents 32 victims.

An agreement had been reached in the multi-million dollar settlement, but now both sides are blaming each other for it falling through.

“The stories that I can narrate to each of you about their suffering would touch each of you in the heart and soul,” said Patrick Tomaszewicz, Fazzano & Tomaszewicz, representing 60 victims.

The diocese has proposed a new plan of a trust worth about \$30 million, much of it coming from property sales.

The victims say it's not as much as before.

“By our calculation, it's about \$3.2 million, and money was cut by the Diocese as well as the parishes and some of the other entities. As I indicated, that is a lot of money,” Reardon said.

“I was lied to, I was betrayed and forced to believe in something that never came true,” Victim 2 said. “I am still dealing with a lot of depression. I'm dealing with a lot of anxiety and there's not a day that goes by that I don't want revenge.”

Friday, a representative from the diocese said, in part, “The Diocese remains steadfast in its belief that its plan will maximize the recovery for claimants, while plaintiffs' counsel plainly seeks a path of protracted litigation, which does nothing to enhance the recovery for their constituency.”

Now, both parties return to mediation.

Both sides have sat down about a half dozen times already.

The next one is not scheduled yet but should happen sometime in November.

Sex abuse victims and the Diocese of Norwich are struggling to reach a settlement.



[HTTPS://WWW.WTNH.COM/NEWS/CONNECTICUT/NEW-LONDON/SEX-ABUSE-VICTIMS-SAY-NORWICH-DIOCESE-CHANGED-THEIR-COMPENSATION-AGREEMENT/](https://www.wtnh.com/news/connecticut/new-london/sex-abuse-victims-say-norwich-diocese-changed-their-compensation-agreement/)

NEW LONDON

Sex abuse victims say Norwich Diocese changed their compensation agreement

by: [Kent Pierce](#)

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NORWICH, Conn. (WTNH) — Catholic church sex abuse victims and their lawyers are speaking out after the way the Norwich Diocese tried to change a compensation plan.

The Diocese said it is actually the victims who walked away from the existing plan, but the changes- and the delays- have victims angry.

“I was lied to,” said one victim, who asked not to be identified. “I was betrayed.”

They are one of dozens saying they were sexually abused by members of the Catholic Church in the Norwich Diocese.

They say the betrayal started with the abuse. Much of that happened years ago at the Mount Saint John School for troubled boys in Deep River.

Facing all those abuse claims three years ago, the Norwich Diocese filed for bankruptcy. But the bishop at the time made a promise to abuse survivors.

“The bankruptcy court will oversee a settlement that ensures that all survivors are included and treated fairly,” Bishop Michael Cote said in July of 2021.

Lawyers for victims said they worked out a plan with the Diocese to create a \$29 million trust to pay victims. Then, they say, the Diocese betrayed them again.

“The \$29 million was cut in the plan filed by the Diocese recently by our calculations, it’s about \$3.2 million,” said Kelly Reardon of the Reardon Law Firm, which represents 32 of the victims.

A public relations firm hired by the Diocese released a statement two weeks ago saying it was the victims who had abandoned the agreement and unilaterally withdrew from that plan.

Victims’ lawyers say the Supreme Court ruling in the Purdue Pharma case changed how victims needed to be compensated and they had to draw up a new plan. They also say the Diocese has spent millions on lawyers and PR professionals instead of helping victims.

“Why have they already paid their lawyers money to prepare 149 objections to all of the claims to challenge them?” Reardon said.

It’s money they say can help with therapy and other issues stemming from the abuse.

“No amount of money in the world could erase the pain or erase what was done but somebody needs to be held accountable,” one victim said.

The victims’ lawyers said the next step is mediation. That is scheduled for November, and they said they will insist the Diocese get back closer to that \$29 million number.

News 8 received the following statement from Louis DeLucia, who is presenting the Diocese:

The Diocese remains committed to consensually resolving the asserted abuse claims. To that end, the Diocese also sought and welcomes the Court-directed mediation of the their claims and plan disputes, which was actually opposed by those holding today’s press conference.

The Diocese remains steadfast in its belief that its plan will maximize the recovery for claimants, while plaintiffs' counsel plainly seeks a path of protracted litigation, which does nothing to enhance the recovery for their constituency.



[NORWICH](#)

Attorneys representing Norwich Diocese's sexual assault survivors say new filings are unfair

The attorneys told FOX61 the Diocese wants to cut the amount of money survivors receive and make them relive their trauma in court.

Author: Brooke Griffin

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NORWICH, Conn. — The Diocese of Norwich filed to cut the amount of money sexual assault victims would otherwise receive in an ongoing settlement, and attorneys representing those survivors said Friday the recent filings are unfair to those impacted.

The attorneys told FOX61 the Diocese wants to cut the amount of money survivors receive and make them relive their trauma in court.

In 2019, the Diocese of Norwich released a list of 43 priests who have been accused of sexual abuse. Since then, at least 140 survivors have come forward.

Two of those survivors spoke to FOX61 Friday. They did not want their names mentioned or used in this story. However, they were willing to share their story on camera. Each of the men was emotional as they spoke.

“It’s a hard thing to tell someone you’ve been molested by someone you trust,” said an unnamed survivor.

As those cases made their way through the legal system, the Diocese filed for bankruptcy, claiming this would help them compensate the victims.

Attorney Kelly Reardon represents dozens of the victims in this case. She told FOX61 that coming to that agreement was a high spot in this case.

“All survivors would be included in a settlement and treated fairly,” Reardon said.

Since then, Reardon said there has been a lot of frustration.

Both sides agreed on a monetary amount. That number most recently came out to a \$29 million split between survivors. Originally, it was \$32 million.

Attorneys said Friday the Diocese has gone back on that agreement. Now the money has decreased by \$3.2 million, bringing the total closer to a \$26 million payout.

“That’s not right or consistent with the bishop’s message three years ago that this bankruptcy was intended to compensate all those who were harmed,” Reardon said.

Attorneys said in the new financial plan proposed, the victims would also be subject to questioning in the courtroom about their abuse.

“I have depression, I have anxiety, and there’s not a day in my mind that goes by I just want revenge,” an unnamed survivor said.

This group tells us the next step is meeting with the diocese to try to find a solution that works for everyone. This way, the survivors can try to heal.

“We will go in good faith, but they must recognize the commitment to survivors. They should dig deep and pay the money they committed to pay,” Reardon said.

FOX61 has reached out to the Diocese of Norwich for a statement concerning the new monetary amount and the attorney's claims. Louis DeLucia, a spokesperson representing the Diocese said midday Friday, *"The Diocese remains committed to consensually resolving the asserted abuse claims. To that end, the Diocese also sought and welcomes the Court-directed mediation of their claims and plan disputes, which was actually opposed by those holding today's press conference."*

The Diocese remains steadfast in its belief that its plan will maximize the recovery for claimants, while plaintiffs' counsel plainly seeks a path of protracted litigation, which does nothing to enhance the recovery for their constituency."

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<https://www.theday.com/local-news/20240920/men-suing-norwich-diocese-over-sex-assault-claims-decry-delay-in-bankruptcy-case/>

Men suing Norwich Diocese over sex assault claims decry delay in bankruptcy case

September 20, 2024

By **Greg Smith**

Day Staff Writer

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Hartford — Seated before a bank of television news cameras on Friday, a New London man who says he was repeatedly sexually abused as a young teen at a school for troubled youth run by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich broke down in tears.

The man, who asked not to be identified, had a prepared statement for a press conference decrying a delay in the diocese’s compensation to victims but found it too difficult to read, offering his written statement instead. In and out of foster homes, the man was 14 when he was sent by the state to Mount Saint John Academy, a now defunct diocese-run facility for troubled youth in Deep River.

He is among a group who filed suit in 2018 claiming they were fondled, sodomized and raped at Mount Saint John between 1990 and 2002. The man said he met “Brother Paul,” at the school “who did horrible sexual things to me that I will never forget.”

The late Christian Brother K. Paul McGlade is among others accused of abusing youth at the school. The man said he tried to escape 25 times and each time was

sent back to a place where he was supposed to get help but ended up destroying his life.

“Enough is enough. This needs to end. What the church let happen to me will affect me for the rest of my life, and now the church needs to make it right,” the man’s statement reads.

The man joined with lawyers for some of the more than 140 people who say they were sexually abused by priests and employees of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich and now allege the church is engaged in delay tactics, holding back compensation and further victimizing abuse survivors.

New London attorneys Kelly Reardon, who represents the man, and Hartford attorney Patrick Tomasiewicz, who collectively represent more than 100 people with claims against the church, held a press conference Friday at The Hartford Club and went on the offensive about the latest developments in the church’s three-year-old bankruptcy case.

Reardon said the church, in recent court filings, has threatened to litigate claims against the church and has reduced the proposed amount of compensation to the alleged victims.

“It puts the survivors in a position where they now are worried they may never get closure and they may have to litigate the claims and relive their experiences which is not what the bankruptcy was intended to do,” Reardon said.

The Chapter 11 bankruptcy case, filed by the diocese in July 2021 in the face of numerous lawsuits by people who claim they were sexually abused, was on a path to settlement with a proposed \$32 million trust fund set up by the diocese funded with contributions from the church’s parishes and schools and through sale of properties such as St. Bernard School in Montville.

But that settlement is again on hold because of dueling proposals by lawyers for the victims and the diocese. The new plans are the result of a Supreme Court ruling in July involving a class-action lawsuit against Purdue Pharma that forced the two sides to come up with alternate plans.

A judge in the bankruptcy case recently ordered mediation between the diocese and the sexual assault victims’ group known as the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors. The two sides met with court-appointed retired bankruptcy Judge Joan Feeney on Thursday and have future meetings in the planning stages.

The diocese, in a statement from attorney Louis DeLucia, said it “remains committed to consensually resolving the asserted abuse claims.”

“To that end, the Diocese also sought and welcomes the Court-directed mediation of their claims and plan disputes, which was actually opposed by those holding today’s press conference,” DeLucia said.

“The Diocese remains steadfast in its belief that its plan will maximize the recovery for claimants, while plaintiffs’ counsel plainly seeks a path of protracted litigation, which does nothing to enhance the recovery for their constituency,” Delucia said in the statement.

Reardon represents 32 of the alleged victims.

Another man who also attended Friday’s press conference said he was abused at Mount Saint John, and continues to suffer from anxiety and depression.

“There’s not a day in my life that goes by that I just don’t want revenge. No amount of money in the world can erase the pain...but somebody needs to be held accountable,” the man said. “I just want this to end.”

Reardon said former Bishop Michael Cote “promised the bankruptcy case would be a tool to ensure that all survivors would be included in an equitable settlement and treated fairly.”

While there have been glimmers of a settlement agreement, Reardon said recent court filings show the church reducing the funding that was promised by \$2 million.

“That’s a lot of money to these men and women who have been abused and harmed,” Reardon said.

Tomasiewicz, who represents 62 survivors, said the fact the church might now decide to challenge the claims “is disconcerting. It goes beyond that, it’s extremely disturbing.”

Under previously submitted plans to the bankruptcy court, compensation to alleged victims would vary by specifics of the allegations and average \$300,000 for some of the alleged victims.

Compensation to individuals with claims, but are barred from filing suit because they are beyond the state's statute of limitations, would average about \$45,000.

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