

Modified Evans' jury continues deliberations

By JENNIFER L. SAUNDERS
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DOVER — The modified jury in the Chad E. Evans murder trial returned to court this morning to continue deliberating, after more than five hours of work on Thursday.

The jury's configuration changed Thursday morning when one female juror had to be excused for unspecified personal reasons. A male alternate was seated in her place.

"When such a substitution occurs, the jury must begin its deliberation over again," said Strafford County Superior Court Judge Tina L. Nadeau. The alternates are unable to remain in the jury room during deliberations, as the legal system calls for a unanimous verdict rendered by 12 of the defendant's peers. If an alternate should be called back to serve, Nadeau explained Thursday, the deliberations must begin anew to allow all 12 to discuss the issues and hear the opinions and insights of the newest juror.

The six women and six men who make up the new jury agreed Thursday morning to

start over where they first began — 10 hours of deliberation earlier. If a verdict is not reached today, the jury will return to deliberate next week.

Throughout Evans' trial, 15 jurors — seven men and eight women — were in the courtroom taking notes and listening to the testimony. After closing arguments on Tuesday, however, Nadeau chose three jurors at random, and made them alternates.

The alternates were sent home, with strict instructions not to follow any news reports of the trial or to discuss it with anyone until a verdict was issued. The reason, Nadeau told the jurors Tuesday, is that unforeseen circumstances sometimes require that a juror to be excused and an alternate take that juror's place.

Evans, 30, a former member of the Keene Board of Education, faces 10 charges, including second-degree murder, in connection with the death of Cassidy Bortner on Nov. 9, 2000.

Kassidy, who was 21 months old at the time of her death, was the daughter of Evans' girlfriend, Amanda Bortner. Bortner, 19,

lived with Evans at his house in Rochester for about three months before her daughter died.

Evans is charged with one count of first-degree assault for allegedly fracturing Cassidy's left leg; six counts of second-degree assault, alleging he grabbed and bruised the toddler's face; one count of endangering the welfare of a child; and one count of simple assault, for allegedly

placing his hands on Bortner's neck.

Evans faces up to life in prison if convicted on the second-degree murder charge. He is being held at Strafford County Jail after violating his bail conditions by living with Bortner for about nine months after he was charged in Cassidy's death.

Bortner faces two counts of endangering the welfare of a child.