



News

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Evans asks for sequestered jury in murder trial of Kassidy Bortner

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DOVER — The attorney for a Rochester man accused of beating his girlfriend's daughter to death has asked a judge to consider sequestering the jury for his client's upcoming trial.

Chad E. Evans, 29, of 191 Milton Road in Rochester faces charges of second-degree murder and assault in connection with the death of 21-month-old Kassidy Bortner.

Evans, who is free on \$100,000 surety bail, spent the morning and early afternoon Wednesday at Strafford County Superior Court. With him was his attorney, Alan J. Cronheim of Portsmouth, who addressed the court during this second of four pretrial conferences.

Judge Tina Nadeau listened as Cronheim said the defense is considering a request to sequester the jury.

"There has been some extraordinary publicity," Cronheim said of the case.

Although sequestering the jury usually accompanies a first-degree murder case, Cronheim brought up Kassidy's young age and the alleged abuse as "understandably difficult issues" for jurors.

New Hampshire Special Assistant Attorney General Christopher Carter said he would not object to the court's decision regarding sequestering the jury, given the media attention to the case.

Kassidy died in November after her mother, 19-year-old Amanda Bortner, brought the toddler from Evans' home to her sister's apartment in Kittery, Maine, and went to work at a nearby clothing store.



According to preliminary reports by the Maine state medical examiner, Cassidy died from blunt force injury to the head. Affidavits filed in Rochester District Court shortly after Cassidy's death allege Evans repeatedly beat the toddler for four to six weeks prior to her death.

Nadeau said she would consider Cronheim's request, but added she did not believe publicity alone warranted sequestering the jury.

Cronheim suggested other ways to weed out "unqualified" jurors, including questions during jury selection to determine knowledge of the case and past experiences with child abuse.

Nadeau asked Cronheim whether he expected to file any motions to dismiss or suppress evidence, and Cronheim said he did not.

He did say the defense is considering challenging statements made in the indictments against Evans regarding specific abuse he is said to have inflicted on Cassidy.

Nadeau set a final deadline of Sept. 15 for any major motions related to the trial.

In terms of issues related to evidence disclosure between the defense team and the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office, Cronheim and Carter agreed to exchange witness lists during the final pretrial conference on Nov. 15.

Currently, jury selection for the trial is scheduled for Nov. 26. However, Cronheim asked the court to consider moving that date to Dec. 3 to accommodate a scheduling conflict for his co-counsel, Mark Sisti.

Nadeau asked Carter and Cronheim for an estimate on the trial's length, and they agreed it will take about two weeks from opening statements to closing arguments.

Nadeau said she would take under advisement Cronheim's requests and make a decision on the jury selection process and trial date.