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Impaneling jurors in Evans murder case to continue next week

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DOVER — After two days of selection, eight jurors have been chosen for the trial of a former Rochester man accused of beating his girlfriend's daughter to death.

Chad E. Evans, 30, formerly of Milton Road in Rochester and Sullivan Street in Keene, is facing a second-degree murder charge and eight felony counts of assault in connection with the death of 21-month-old Cassidy Bortner in November 2000.

Jury selection for the trial began Tuesday and continued through the early afternoon on Wednesday as attorneys for the defense and the prosecution had the opportunity to ask potential jurors specific questions about the case.

Judge Tina Nadeau, who will be presiding over the trial when it begins next week, has been overseeing the jury selection process. On the first day, about 40 percent of the jurors present were screened out of the selection process because of either personal conflicts or prior knowledge about the case.

Of the 100 potential jurors assembled, a pool of about 60 reached the second phase of the selection, which began Tuesday afternoon.

N. William Delker and Simon Brown of the New Hampshire attorney general's office joined Mark Sisti and Alan Cronheim, who are representing Evans, to meet with Nadeau and each potential juror.

Kassidy died from a blunt-force injury to the head following at least six weeks of abuse, according to court documents.

Evans was living with Amanda Bortner, Cassidy's mother, at the time and she has told police she knew about the abuse of her daughter and agreed to help conceal it, court documents allege.

Before being selected to serve on the Evans trial, jurors must answer under oath what they know about the case from news reports or other sources, and speak to any personal biases they

might have.

For example, the attorneys for the state asked the jurors their views on corporal punishment for children. The defense attorneys often questioned whether particular jurors could follow the law and convict Evans only if the state proves its case beyond a reasonable doubt.

After about four hours of questioning, the two sides agreed on an additional four jurors to join the four selected Tuesday afternoon. About a dozen potential jurors were excused from the case during Wednesday's interviews.

Jury selection is scheduled to resume at 9 a.m. Monday, with the evidentiary phase of the trial to begin either Tuesday or Wednesday depending on when jury selection is complete.

The trial, excluding jury selection, is expected to last two weeks.

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