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Evans sentenced 28-years to life in murder of 21-month-old

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DOVER, N.H. (AP) — A former Rochester man convicted in the beating death of his girlfriend's daughter was sentenced Tuesday to 28 years to life in prison.

Chad Evans, 30, was convicted in December of second-degree murder in the death of Kassidy Bortner, who died Nov. 9, 2000, at a baby-sitter's home. He also was convicted of six lesser assault charges and child endangerment.

On Tuesday, Evans fought tears as he apologized for "letting down Kassidy," but he did not admit killing her.

"It pains me more than anything I can express in words that I let so many people down, especially Kassidy," he said. "There's not been a minute since fall 2000 that I have felt anything but shame and regret for the things that have happened."

He later turned around to face Kassidy's mother, Amanda Bortner.

"Amanda, I am so sorry for the emptiness and hurt you are going to feel for the rest of your life," he said. "You and Kassidy deserved a lot more. I'm really sorry."

Bortner will be tried in June on child endangerment charges. She reluctantly testified against Evans under limited immunity.

Bortner's turn to speak at the hearing came after several of her relatives described how much they had loved Kassidy and what a void her death has left in their lives.

"I find it really strange that everyone cares so much about Kassidy now, and no one did when she was alive ... They all failed Kassidy," she said.

"I never knew what love was until Kassidy was born. I pray to God she forgives my lack of motherly instincts."

During the trial, prosecutors said Kassidy was subjected to months of abuse at the hands of Evans, who was frustrated by

the girl's crying.

Assistant Attorney General Simon Brown sought a sentence of 60 years to life.

"For whatever reason, Cassidy became the focal point for the defendant's anger and rage," Brown said Tuesday. "This was not one crime, one event, one punch or one fit of rage. This systematic."

Bortner told police Evans beat Cassidy and threw her into walls, but she backed off those accusations during the trial and admitted she had been living with Evans after Cassidy's death in violation of a court order.

Defense lawyers argued the real killer was Cassidy's baby sitter, Jefferey Marshall, the last person to see the girl alive. He is the boyfriend of Amanda Bortner's sister.

Evans did not testify. His lawyers called only one witness, a doctor who testified the child's fatal injury could have been caused within two hours of her death, at a time when she was with Marshall in Kittery, Maine.

Defense lawyer Mark Sisti did not recommend a specific sentence, but said the one proposed by prosecutors was too harsh. He plans to appeal the conviction.

"You have before you today, even though he is in an orange jumpsuit, even though he's been convicted of second-degree murder, a productive member of society, someone who should not be thrown away," he said.

Judge Tina Nadeau agreed, saying Evans' history of helping others and being a good father to his young son from a previous marriage showed he could be rehabilitated.

But she also noted that he had been convicted of assaulting his ex-wife. Nadeau said she had seen another side of Evans and that he deserved to spend significant time behind bars.

"Until today, I've seen a man who showed no sign of remorse," she said. "I hope someday you'll find the courage to tell your friends and family, and Amanda, what you did to Cassidy."

Nadeau said she had researched similar cases in making her decision, but the prosecutor said she relied on outdated rulings.

"We like to think in the last decade, we've learned a bit more about sentencing and the appropriate sentence in these sorts of cases," Brown said.

As Evans left the courtroom, his family offered support, shouting, "We love you Chad, we all believe in you!"

Brown said he found the display inappropriate.

"What we found disturbing today was that at the end of the proceeding, as the defendant was led out in handcuffs, there were echos of how much everyone loved Chad, but this case has been about a girl less than two years old who was murdered," he said. "Nobody mentioned Cassidy."