

# Bortner eyeing plea bargain

By JENNIFER L. SAUNDERS  
Democrat Staff Writer

DOVER — The mother of a 21-month-old girl beaten to death in November 2000 is exploring a plea agreement to avoid her June child endangerment trial.

Amanda Bortner, whose most recent address according to court documents is Endicott Road in Weirs Beach, was charged about one year after her daughter's death with two counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

Kassidy Caitlyn Bortner died on Nov. 9, 2000 after what prosecutors have described as months of abuse at the hands of her mother's boyfriend, Chad E. Evans.

Evans, 30, formerly of 191 Milton Road in Rochester, was convicted of second-degree murder and multiple counts of assault following his trial in December 2001. Evans was sentenced last month to serve a minimum of 28 years in prison.

Bortner, 20, said during Evans' trial that she loves him and misses him.

Bortner did not show up for her pre-trial conference in Strafford County Superior this morning. However, her court-appointed attorney Patricia

Wiberg said she spoke with Bortner by telephone and her absence was excused. This is the second time Bortner has missed a status conference for her upcoming trial.

Wiberg said plea negotiations are ongoing. If a plea is not entered on June 10, the trial will need to be postponed until fall because Wiberg needs additional time to prepare. Assistant attorney general David W. Ruoff could not comment on whether his office would negotiate a plea agreement with Bortner.

According to the charges against her, Bortner violated a duty of care to her daughter by failing to protect her from Evans' abuse in the weeks leading up to her death.

The charges also allege Bortner failed to protect Kassidy in the hours before her death, citing her conduct on the day Kassidy died.

According to court documents, Bortner drove Kassidy from the Rochester residence to the home of her sister, Jennifer Bortner-Conley, in Kittery, Maine.

Bortner and her sister testified that they left Kassidy on a bed in the apartment in the care of Bortner-Conley's boyfriend, F. Jefferey Marshall.