

Lawsuits filed against diocese, alleging abuse

By David Conti
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Two more men this week sued the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, alleging sexual abuse by priests who gave them alcohol. The men also allege a cover-up by church leaders.

The two unnamed men bring to 35 the number of people who have filed abuse cases since January 2004. The allegations involve 18 former priests in the diocese. None of the cases has made it to trial.

One man, now 45, says in the lawsuit filed Monday in Allegheny County court that he was 15 when the Rev. M. Eric Diskin began fondling and sodomizing him at St. Paul Church in Butler. Diskin, who retired in 2003 after being accused of fondling a boy, was named in two other lawsuits filed against the diocese last year.

The other plaintiff, a 53-year-old McKeesport man, says in his lawsuit that the Rev. John Lukasik fondled him at St. Mary Czestochowa Church in McKeesport when he was 11.

Neither Diskin nor Lukasik could be reached for comment.

Diocese spokesman the Rev. Ronald P. Lengwin said Lukasik is no longer with the diocese. He said no one who has been accused of sexual abuse is in the ministry.

Neither priest is named as a defendant because the statute of limitations has passed. Instead, all of the lawsuits have asked the court to hold church leaders -- Bishop Donald Wuerl and his predecessor, Anthony Bevilacqua, the retired archbishop of Philadelphia -- responsible for allowing the alleged assaults to occur.