

August 21, 2007 - Non-practicing priest faces probation for molesting charge
Mendham, NJ, by Margaret McHugh

A non-practicing Roman Catholic priest charged with molesting four teenage boys at a Mendham drug treatment program faces probation under a plea deal he accepted this morning.

Richard Mieliwocki, 60, pleaded guilty to two counts of child abuse. He had previously agreed to give up his social work license.

Mieliwocki, a Madison resident, was accused of molesting four boys, ages 16 to 18, during therapy sessions at Daytop Village between March and December of 2004.

A 2005 plea deal called for Mieliwocki to spend five to seven years in state prison. One of the victims died since Mieliwocki's arrest.

Defense attorney, Thomas C. Pluciennik, previously has said Mieliwocki committed no crime.

Mieliwocki became a social worker after the church removed him from duty 13 years ago following allegations of sexual misconduct. He was removed from duty in February 1994 after the archdiocese response team found credence in the two men's claims Mieliwocki abused them at Our Lady of Sorrows in South Orange, beginning in 1988, according to a Newark Archdiocesan spokesman.

The archdiocese awarded \$60,000 to one of the victims in 1994.

Mieliwocki, then a priest at the Church of St. Joseph the Carpenter in Roselle, was placed on administrative leave for six months and ordered to undergo counseling, but instead, he walked away. The church heard from him in late 1999 or early 2000 when he asked to be reassigned as a priest but was denied.

As a social worker, Mieliwocki avoided having his license suspended in 1999 for inappropriate behavior with a male patient only by agreeing to weekly monitoring for three years, a consent order showed.

Mieliwocki's case shows how someone with a checkered history could move from job to job without detection. The administration at Daytop knew nothing about the allegations against him when they hired him.

Archdiocese spokesman Jim Goodness has said the church would have divulged its findings had employers inquired. However, Daytop officials have said Mieliwocki never revealed he was a priest.