News



Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral is pictured in this file photo. The Archdiocese of Chicago filed a countersuit March 24, 2025, against seven alleged victims of child sex abuse who either have pending settlements or already received settlements in the millions in the Daniel McCormack priest abuse case. (OSV News/Reuters/Andrew Nelles)

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The Archdiocese of Chicago filed a countersuit March 24 against seven alleged victims of clergy child sex abuse who either have pending settlements or have already received settlements in the millions of dollars.

The lawsuit, provided to OSV News by the archdiocese, documents a network of at least 30 people, including convicted criminals, gang members and friends, many with family ties to each other, who allegedly conspired to defraud the church.

The lawsuit accuses the defendants of a "scheme to manufacture and assert fraudulent claims of priest sexual abuse for financial gain." It alleges "a quid pro quo among coconspirators" who, planning to share settlement payouts, coached each other in successfully pursuing a claim and connect them to lawyers "who are expected to aggressively seek settlement even for the most dubious claims."

"In some instances, the coconspirators exchange money even before achieving a settlement, enabled by litigation funding loans that are obtained with the assistance of plaintiff's counsel," according to the lawsuit.

In a press release about the countersuit, attorney James Geoly, the archdiocese's general counsel, said, "We trust and believe people when they come forward with abuse claims. These individuals have violated that trust and have attempted to take advantage of it."

"We have a duty to oppose claims we know are false to protect and stand up for real survivors of abuse who ultimately are the ones harmed by fraud," he said.

Geoly told a local TV news station that while investigating sexual abuse claims, the archdiocese flagged a case "that looked very fishy." That led the archdiocese to

investigate the prisoner's subpoenaed phone calls, which are disclosed to inmates as recorded.

"We didn't know what we were going to find. But it turns out, after listening to many hours of calls, that person was heard basically admitting that the whole claim against us was a fraud," Geoly told FOX 32 Chicago.

That call led to more calls that revealed others were trying to file claims from prison and jail.

Geoly said archdiocese attorneys pored over thousands of hours of recorded phone conversations between the dozens of "Does" listed in the lawsuit.

The 29 unnamed men and one woman allegedly connived to help each other "get on the lick" (as the lawsuit states they call a scam) of the archdiocese in exchange for a cut in whatever settlements those they helped would receive.

The lawsuit identifies the defendants and others involved as "Doe" and a number. It alleges that the first "Does," Doe 101 and Doe 102, drained their 2012 settlements quickly and came up with schemes to make money on others' false claims for settlements for alleged abuse by Daniel McCormack, a former priest and notorious child sex offender who preyed on boys on Chicago's West Side.

Some conversations identified in the lawsuit indicated the claimants did not know then-Fr. McCormack, nor did they go to St. Agatha Parish where he was pastor, and they did not play basketball at Our Lady of the Westside Catholic School, where he was coach, all on Chicago's West Side.

Those involved in the alleged scam outside of prison, who had received settlements or litigation-funding loans dispensed prior to settling, allegedly helped their family members and close associates who were in prison or jail. In the recorded phone conversations, they said they would help them write letters, coached them through playing a victim and directed them to attorneys.

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In the lawsuit, the "Does" refer to three attorneys, including Lyndsay Markley, whose website lists McCormack abuse settlements with the Chicago Archdiocese for four

men that total $5.4 million. An archdiocesan spokesperson told OSV News the archdiocese does not disclose settlements.

Markley's clients are not among the seven "Does" the archdiocese lists in its countersuit. She told OSV News April 1 that "I am not presently representing anyone involved in this matter nor do I know the identities of any of the individuals involved so I cannot responsibly or meaningfully comment on this matter."

Attorney Gregory Condon, who represents the two main defendants of the countersuit, did not immediately answer OSV News' request for comment.

In a statement sent to the Chicago Tribune March 24, Condon said, "The filing appears to be a shameless hit piece apparently designed to intimidate me. ... I am not intimidated. I believe in every sexually abused client that I have represented." He also said therapists who evaluated his clients found them to be "completely credible" and that the archdiocese should have attorneys "investigate its own priests."

The archdiocese's suit says some who were awarded settlements loaned money to those they helped fabricate false claims, with the expectation they would be paid back with extra profit once claims were settled. The lawsuit shows redacted photos of those who received settlements on vacations and featured in music videos.

It also states that some bought luxury cars and luxury items, and sold annuity portions of their settlements "for pennies on the dollar" instead of using the money for therapy, schooling, to help find work and for childcare, which were the terms of the settlement agreements for funds held in trust.

According to the lawsuit, the scheme appears to have unraveled when in phone conversations, a settlement recipient, Doe 107, used up all of his settlement funds before he could pay back Doe 102, another settlement payee, who beat up 107. So 107, in need of money to pay him back, schemed with his cousin in prison, Doe 106, whose 2013 phone calls were uncovered by the archdiocese. The phone conversations uncovered that 107 said this would be 106's entry into the enterprise.

In a similar suspected case, another inmate tried to do the same with someone outside of prison who admitted he was nowhere near a program run by McCormack. This inmate's calls also revealed his ties to 106 and 107 and the wide network of scheming tied to those listed in the suit.

McCormack pleaded guilty in 2007 to abusing five boys at St. Agatha and was sentenced to five years in prison. Often labeled one of the most notorious abusers with 130 listed survivors, according to a 2023 Illinois attorney general report on clergy abuse, he was released from jail and sent to a mental health facility for sex offenders in west-central Illinois. Some of his sexual abuse and misconduct allegations predate his 1994 ordination.

A Cook County judge in 2018 deemed McCormack sexually violent and ordered him to remain in the facility. The Illinois Court of Appeals overturned the ruling in 2021, saying prosecutors did not have a strong enough case that he would reoffend.

McCormack, 56, currently lives in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood, according to the city's sex offender registry.

The archdiocese's lawsuit says the fraudulent claims "have hurt real victims, by diverting resources devoted to real victims, and by undermining the archdiocese's ability to expeditiously resolve claims by real victims."

An archdiocesan official said in an email to OSV News that legitimate claimants should not fear any countersuits.

"We have always treated claimants with compassion and respect," the statement said. "Every person who comes forward is offered the services of our Office of Victim Assistance. This occurs promptly before any investigation occurs. It is also our duty to true victims and their families to investigate claims."

In the multi-count lawsuit, the archdiocese seeks injunctions on any further movement on the fraudulent claims and to recover damages, attorney fees, punitive damages that are triple and double the original damages, among other costs.