

Another young man files suit alleging molesting by priest

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A second lawsuit alleging that a former Miles City parish priest molested a young man was filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Billings.

Harold James Woehl, 21, of Miles City, said in the lawsuit that the Rev. Kirk Morgan gained his trust and confidence and used it to repeatedly sexually abuse him. According to the lawsuit, Woehl was between 17 and 20 at the time.

The civil complaint was brought by the Billings firm of Edwards, Tolstedt & Frickle, which last month filed a similar lawsuit alleging that Morgan had sexually abused another young parishioner, Jimmie Dean Johnson, now 20. The Johnson lawsuit also listed the Roman Catholic bishop of Great Falls-Billings as a defendant, charging that he knew or should have known about Morgan and failed to supervise him or warn potential victims. Woehl's lawsuit

does not name the bishop, only Morgan. Both Johnson and Woehl are seeking punitive as well as actual damages.

Attorneys for the diocese and for Morgan said Thursday that they had not seen the Woehl complaint and could not comment on it. Morgan is believed to be in Connecticut.

According to the new lawsuit, Woehl is afflicted with developmental disabilities caused by physical, emotional and environmental circumstances, which made him vulnerable to Morgan. Among the circumstances was the fact Woehl has not heard from his biological father since his preschool years and that he and his mother are impoverished.

Woehl did not confide in anyone until reading a story in the Feb. 4 Gazette about Johnson's lawsuit. The lawsuit said that Woehl was profoundly and deeply upset by a press release from the bishop that alluded to Morgan's years of dedicated ministry and its benefit to many people.