

# Church fighting sexual abuse lawsuit

*Former teacher raped girl, her parents say*

**By Mark Waller**  
East Jefferson bureau

A teenage girl's parents have sued Crescent City Baptist Church in Metairie, saying their daughter was sexually abused by a former Bible teacher at the church-run school in 2001.

The family filed the lawsuit anonymously and also left unnamed the former teacher they accuse of attacking the girl when she was 13 years old. The church has denied all the allegations in an answer to the lawsuit filed in the 24th Judicial District Court in Gretna.

Douglas Sunseri, an attorney for the family, said the parents are not identifying themselves to avoid drawing attention to their 16-year-old daughter, whose emotional state remains fragile. The teacher also is unnamed, Sunseri said, partly because doing so could hinder the chances for a settlement.

The lawsuit says the teacher made sexually suggestive comments to the girl and inappropriately complimented her physical appearance. The lawsuit says he eventually lured her into a storage room and raped

## Girl's mental state cited in years-long delay of suit

**CHURCH**, from B-1

her and later lured her into a science laboratory, where he forced her to perform oral sex and raped her.

After the girl told her mother about the attacks, she left the school and underwent intensive therapy, counseling and medication, the lawsuit says.

Sunseri on Monday said psychological problems the girl suffered because of the attacks prevented her for years from being able to contribute to the lawsuit, which is why it wasn't filed until April. Her distress also has prevented progress on any criminal proceedings against the teacher, who no longer works at the school and has not been arrested, Sunseri said.

Officials with the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and the district attorney's office said Tuesday that they could not immediately locate any records of

the case.

An attorney for the church said Tuesday afternoon that he could not immediately comment, although Crescent City Baptist filed a response to the lawsuit denying the allegations and questioning the timing of the legal action, almost four years after the alleged incidents.


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