

Therapist sexually abused women at Missouri prison for years, lawsuit says

BY LUKE NOZICKA

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Sexual violence is a social and public health problem in the U.S. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey says nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men experienced sexual violence victimization other than rape at some point in their lives. BY CDC



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A therapist who worked at a Missouri prison for women sexually abused his patients for years and preyed on inmates with mental health issues, according to a federal lawsuit.

While the counselor, John Thomas Dunn, was known by inmates as a “creep,” his criminal behavior at Chillicothe Correctional Center did not end until he was arrested by an outside agency, the lawsuit contends.

The lawsuit was filed by 49-year-old Teresa Ketner, who said she was sexually assaulted by Dunn while she was confined at the state Department of Corrections

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She was assigned to Dunn, and became his victim, according to the lawsuit. She said she still has nightmares.

"It's hell," Ketner said in a phone interview from her home in the Lake of the Ozarks area. "I hope these people have to answer for what they've done."

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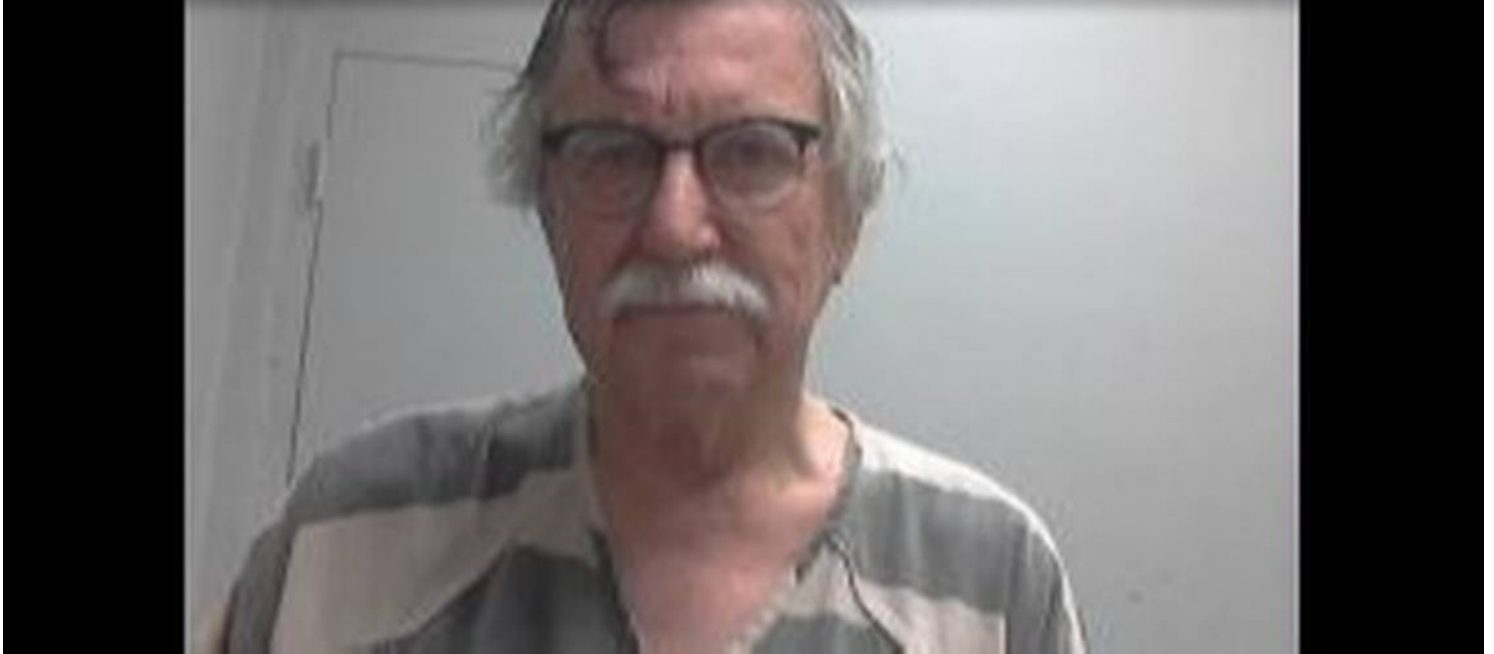
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The allegation was not the first against Dunn. In 2017, he [pleaded guilty to sexual conduct](#) with another prisoner. The year after, [another woman, Karen Backues Keil, filed a lawsuit alleging Dunn began sexually assaulting her](#) after she was raped by a guard at the facility.

As many as nine women have accused Dunn of wrongdoing, whether officially or not, Ketner's attorney, Brendan Roediger, told The Star.



John Thomas Dunn, a former prison counselor who has been convicted of sexually assaulting an inmate.

Roediger said as far as he knows, the [Federal Bureau of Investigation continues to investigate](#) sexual misconduct at Chillicothe Correctional Center, which is about 90 miles northeast of Kansas City. In February, the other woman suing Dunn was informed the U.S. Department of Justice was investigating the possibility of federal criminal charges.

Ketner's lawsuit names as defendants Dunn; Corizon Health Inc., which employed him and has a contract with Missouri prisons; and three other people, including Dunn's supervisor and a state employee who investigated Ketner's allegations. They had an obligation to work to prevent inmates from being abused and failed to protect Ketner, according to the lawsuit.

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Corizon Health and the Department of Corrections did not respond to emails seeking comment Wednesday. Dunn could not be reached for comment by phone and no one answered the door at his listed Kansas City address.

Dunn's attorney has said he no longer works at the prison.

The federal lawsuit was the [fifth filed since mid-2018](#) to allege sexual assault at Chillicothe Correctional Center.



Karen Backues Keil is still suing the guard and the mental health counselor she says raped and sexually assaulted her at Chillicothe Correctional Center. Now the Missouri Attorney General's Office is trying to send her back there. BY [MONTY DAVIS](#) | [ANDY MARSO](#)

ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Ketner was at the prison from 2013 to February 2015. She sought counseling and medication for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, but she was told she first had to speak with a counselor and be given a referral, her lawsuit states.

Dunn was assigned as her counselor. He harassed her from the beginning, directly asking her, according to the lawsuit: "Would you like to be molested?" and laughed.

The sexual abuse occurred in Dunn's office, which had no cameras, according to Ketner's lawsuit. During sessions, he kept the door shut and the shades pulled down, Ketner's attorneys wrote in the suit.

The correctional center has historically placed inmates in solitary confinement, cutting them off from visitation, when they reported Prison Rape Elimination Act violations, according to the lawsuit. Ketner has been in solitary, also known as the "hole," before. It was cold and scary, she said, so she didn't report the alleged abuse.

Ketner was released from the correctional facility in 2015 and returned in 2016. She feared being abused. She requested to see a mental health provider other than Dunn.

When Ketner came forward, her allegations were investigated by a corrections employee who had no authority to investigate Prison Rape Elimination Act violations, according to the lawsuit. He made sexually suggestive comments as he interrogated Ketner, the suit says. That investigator threatened Ketner with solitary and additional charges if she did not recant her story, her attorneys said.

The investigator, she told The Star, asked her: "Why would he go after you when there's young, beautiful women on this camp?"

"Like I'm too old and ugly to rape," Ketner said.

The investigator did not substantiate Ketner's complaint and Dunn was allowed to continue working at Chillicothe Correctional Center, according to the lawsuit.

After Dunn was arrested in 2017, another investigator reviewed previous probes of allegations against Dunn. The new investigator substantiated Ketner's claim and

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