

New Jersey Yeshiva Teacher Accused of Sex Crimes Against Youths

By MARIA NEWMAN
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Since joining the Kushner Yeshiva High School in Livingston, N.J., as a biology teacher in September 2000, Paul Slifer had been popular among students. They liked talking to him, in person and on the Internet, police investigators said. Some of them believed he was a doctor, the police said, and went to him for advice with problems. He offered physical exams.

Last week, the police arrested Mr. Slifer on charges of sexually touching students. Those students, three girls and a boy, all 16 years old, came forward after learning last month that Mr. Slifer had been charged with sexually assaulting a 15-year-old male classmate.

All told, there have been more than 20 charges filed against Mr. Slifer, among them sexual contact, aggravated sexual assault and impersonating a doctor. And police say they are continuing to talk to students.

"We want to make sure there's nothing else out there," said Detective Lt. Craig Handschuch of the Livingston Police Department.

Mr. Slifer, 34, of Livingston, could not be located for comment. Lieutenant Handschuch said he was free on \$97,000 bail in connection with the charges last week.

Students told investigators that Mr. Slifer's misconduct began shortly after he began teaching at the school in September 2000, the police said. The matter came to light on Feb. 9, said the school principal, Rabbi Scot A. Berman, when someone told him about the 15-year-old boy.

The rabbi contacted board members of the Hebrew Academy, which operates the high school.

"We immediately contacted the authorities," he said. "That evening we terminated Paul Slifer from employment. Within 24 hours, on that Monday, we had contacted our parents, assembled our students and shared with them what had transpired and put into motion the mechanism for dealing with the emotional components of this matter for our students, teachers and parents."

The police arrested Mr. Slifer, and school officials encouraged anyone with further information to come forward.

Lieutenant Handschuch said: "The school has been very cooperative with us on this matter. They've been very good with the parents, not just of the victims, but all parents. We were lucky in this situation that people did forward information to us. People had enough sense to say, 'Hey, something doesn't look right here.' "

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