

Jurors face scrutiny in abuse trial

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Potential jurors in the trial of Paul Gutierrez were questioned closely Monday about their own experiences and opinions on sexual abuse.

Jury selection in the case began Monday morning.

Gutierrez, 68, a longtime Vancouver educator and current member of the Vancouver School Board, has been charged with seven counts of child sexual abuse involving a 15-year-old granddaughter.

It's the second time he has been to trial. The first trial in February ended with the jury unable to reach verdicts on any of the charges.

The girl alleges that her grandfather abused her over a five-year period between 1987 and 1992. Among the charges leveled by prosecutors are rape of a child, child molestation, indecent liberties and statutory rape of the girl.

Gutierrez has denied any abuse of the child.

As in the first trial, jurors spent part of the morning filling out a

questionnaire that, among other things, asked if they knew anyone who had been accused of abuse.

Among the responses:

● One said her brother pleaded guilty to sexual abuse. "Some people think he was framed. I just can't believe he did it," the woman said. "I just don't know if I could be fair."

● Another person told defense attorney Steve Thayer and Deputy Prosecutor Kim Farr she saw an allegation of child sexual abuse break up a friend's family.

● A potential juror told the attorneys he has "some really strong emotions" over child abuse based on the behavior of a co-worker. He said the co-worker abused a youngster then attended therapy in Portland. On the way home the co-worker would "stop at topless bars." Asked if he could be impartial, the man replied, "I doubt it. But if it was anything else, you bet."

The man was excused from jury duty.

Jury selection was expected to end today. Trial was expected to start this afternoon or Wednesday.