

Wisconsin judge rules youths must be tried as adults for attempted murder

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A Wisconsin judge ruled on Monday that two 13-year-old girls will stand trial as adults for the first-degree attempted intentional homicide of their classmate in May last year. Waukesha County Circuit Judge Michael Bohren stated that trying the young girls in juvenile court would “unduly depreciate the seriousness of the offense.”

According to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Morgan Geyser and Anissa Weier, who were both 12 years old at the time of their arrest, now face the possibility 45 years in prison if convicted.

Judge Bohren indicated that the girls’ attorneys had not convinced him that the case should be moved to juvenile court where they would face the possibility of three years of detention and court supervision until they turned 18. “This court continues to be concerned with what happens after age 18,” he stated.

“There has to be assurance to the public—and to these defendants as well—that a serious offense has to be dealt with on a serious basis that offers protection to everyone,” Bohren argued.

Geyser and Weier have been charged with attempting to kill their friend in a Waukesha area park after celebrating her twelfth birthday at a sleepover. The girl was found in a ditch by a bicyclist after being stabbed 19 times with a kitchen knife. She was rushed to the hospital by paramedics and survived following six hours of surgery.

The two girls were arrested by police the same day as the assault. They were carrying clothes, food and bottles of water in an apparent attempt to run away.

According to the police, who interrogated both girls without an attorney or their parents present, the attack was motivated by an effort to please Slender Man, a fictional character both girls had read about on the Internet. They reportedly believed Slender Man would

kill their families if they did not take their friend’s life and that after the murder, the imaginary figure would let them live with him in his mansion in Wisconsin’s Northwoods.

During her interrogation, Geyser told police that they had begun planning to kill their friend as early as December 2013. “I honestly don’t know why we did this,” she reportedly told police.

When asked by her police interrogator if she knew what it meant to kill someone, Weier responded, “I believe it’s ending a life and I regret it.” She also reportedly told the police, “The bad part of me wanted her to die, the good part of me wanted her to live.”

The attorneys for Geyser and Weier had attempted to get their clients’ cases moved to juvenile court. Wisconsin law requires that children as young as 10 years old be charged as adults in cases of homicide and sexual assault. Children who find themselves in adult court are allowed an appeal for their case to be moved to juvenile court.

The attorneys argued in separate hearings in May and June that the youths could not get appropriate treatment in an adult detention facility, prosecuting them as adults would not deter others from similar crimes, and that moving the case would not “depreciate the seriousness of the offense.”

They elicited testimony from former teachers as well doctors and psychologists who had examined them for competency. The girls’ teachers described them both as good students who did not express any violent tendencies.

The doctors and psychologist who examined Weier said she had suffered from a delusional disorder which made it possible for her to believe in the Slender Man character and plot with Geyser. According to their testimony, Weier understood that she and Geyser had

been wrong to try to kill their friend and she suffered from depression over her actions. The experts testified that there was no threat of her repeating the accused offense of intentional homicide.

Geyser was diagnosed with early onset schizophrenia in her competency tests. Psychological experts testified that she continues to hold conversations with fictional characters, believes Slender Man may force her to try to kill again, and believes she can use Vulcan mind control to suppress emotions.

According to the *Journal Sentinel*, Geyser's lead attorney, Anthony Cotton, will advise her to plead not guilty by reason of mental defect or disease. If her plea is accepted by the court, she would be committed to a state mental hospital rather than prison.

If convicted, the girls will spend the first years of their sentence at the Copper Lake School in Lincoln County, where all girls convicted in juvenile court in Wisconsin are held. As with other youth convicted as adults, they would be transferred to an adult facility once they turn 18.



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