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Molester gets prison term, predator label

By Jill King Greenwood

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Jerry Alan Valecko was classified a violent sexual predator on Wednesday and sentenced to four to eight years in state prison for molesting four boys.

Before sentencing Valecko, 43, on the 2004 charges of indecent assault, Butler County Judge George H. Hancher said Valecko "has involved himself sexually with young boys and has a sexual preference for young boys. He's predatory in nature."

Valecko told the court and families of his victims -- one of whom was 11 years old at the time of the assault and three who were 12 -- that he was sorry.

Valecko admitted fondling the boys -- all of whom were friends with Valecko's three young sons -- during a sleepover party. In determining Valecko's sentence, Hancher cited Valecko's 1998 conviction on an indecent assault charge for fondling a young boy in Cherry Township. Butler County Assistant District Attorney Gerald Lee Cassady said Valecko was arrested earlier this month while he was out on bond and awaiting sentencing for the four indecent assault convictions.

In the new case, Valecko is accused of sexually molesting an 11-year-old boy multiple times between October and April in Ellwood City, Lawrence County. He was charged with involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, indecent assault and corrupting a minor. He was freed after posting \$25,000 bond.

Cassady said Valecko, a construction supervisor helping to build an Eckerd drugstore in Ellwood City, lured the boy into his van and a trailer on the construction site.

"He's a risk to the community," Cassady said. Valecko, formerly of Center, reportedly was living in Cranberry.

Hancher said Valecko's earlier conviction and the probation he served "obviously had no effect" on his actions.

Parents of the four boys Valecko was convicted of fondling told the judge how their children have been harmed.

"At times, I am weakened watching my son still trying to make sense of it all," one mother read from a statement. "We continue to struggle with this. My son is very fearful of anyone finding out because of the shame involved. He knows

he's done nothing wrong, but the shame is an ongoing process."

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review is not naming the parents to protect the identities of the victims.

The father of another victim sobbed as he told the judge his son has become withdrawn and angry since the molestation.

"Our boy has changed," he said. "He used to be happy. He's different now, and I'll never know what he could have been like."

Valecko's classification as a sexually violent predator means he will have to register with law enforcement officials upon his release from prison, and the community he moves into will be notified. He also was ordered to pay a \$400 fine for each indecent assault charge and to reimburse the county for the cost of prosecuting him.

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