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## THE BUFFALO NEWS

# LOCAL PRIEST IS SUSPECTED OF BUYING CRACK COCAINE

By **Dan Herbeck** ([https://buffalonews.com/author/dan\\_herbeck/](https://buffalonews.com/author/dan_herbeck/))

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A Catholic priest who counsels patients and families at Children's Hospital is under investigation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration for allegedly purchasing crack cocaine.

The Rev. Frank J. Tuchols, 49, was caught buying \$20 worth of crack from a DEA informant on the city's West Side on the evening of Jan. 19, law enforcement officials said.

Father Tuchols was taken into custody by DEA agents that night, questioned and later released into the custody of officials from the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, U.S. Attorney Patrick H. NeMoyer said.

"No formal charges have been placed at this time. . . . We're discussing the matter with Father Tuchols and his attorney," NeMoyer said.

John P. Pieri, Father Tuchols' attorney, said the priest recognizes that "there may be a problem."

"He's presently being evaluated by a doctor," Pieri said. "If any treatment for drug or alcohol addiction is called for, he will follow through on that."

Law enforcement officials said the DEA was not specifically targeting Father Tuchols with its investigation. They said agents were running a sting operation with a cooperating informant when Father Tuchols approached the informant and offered him \$20 for a small amount of crack.

Terrence M. Connors, attorney for the diocese, confirmed that he also is looking into the incident on behalf of the diocese.

Father Tuchols, who did not return calls seeking his comment, has been a priest since 1971. Since 1983, he has been helping patients and their families as the director of pastoral care at Children's Hospital.

Previously, he was assigned in 1976 as a full-time marriage and family counselor with Catholic Charities.

A hospital spokeswoman said Father Tuchols has taken an indefinite medical leave of absence from his duties there. [\(https://buffalonews.com/\)](https://buffalonews.com/)



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"Individuals at the hospital have told me his work there is exemplary and that they have no indication whatever that his work was ever affected by the use of any addictive substance," Pieri said. "Depending on his evaluation and his treatment, he hopes to eventually return to work at the hospital."

"It's a very unfortunate situation, because this man is so highly thought of by the people he works with," said one diocese source who is familiar with the situation.



[\(https://buffalonews.com/author/dan\\_herbeck/\)](https://buffalonews.com/author/dan_herbeck/) **Dan Herbeck** – Dan Herbeck is an investigative reporter who has been at The Buffalo News for nearly 40 years. He is a graduate of Sweet Home High School, Erie County Community College and St. Bonaventure University. He and Lou Michel wrote a best-selling book in 2001 about Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing, "American Terrorist."

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