

The Grand Jury finds that the victims of sexual child abuse often engage in delayed reporting if they report at all. The reasons for delayed reporting are numerous and understandable. The trauma of sexual child abuse on the victims and their families cannot be overstated. Victims find themselves alive and walking but feeling dead or dying.

Victims reported feeling "black inside." Many victims in this investigation did or contemplated committing suicide. The Grand Jury can say no better what a mother of a victim described. The devout Catholic mother said the sexual abuse of her son "ruined our lives."

SECTION VII

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury finds the acts of the predator priests and their enabling Bishops detailed in this report to be criminal. However, they cannot be prosecuted at this time. The statute of limitations for many of the loathsome and criminal actions detailed in this report has expired. In some limited cases the unnamed victim or victims are too deeply traumatized to testify in a court of law.

There is no applicable legal provision which would apply to religious ministers or church officials to permit the extension of the statute of limitations. Many of the accused are dead; answerable now only to a higher authority.

Pennsylvania law has changed since many of these offenses occurred. Some penalties have increased, some charging periods extended. The Grand Jury finds additional legislative action is required.

Abolish the statute of limitation for sexual offenses against minors.

The Grand Jury recognizes this recommendation is not new. Victim advocates and previous grand juries have recommended such action. However this Grand Jury again recognizes a terrible fact. Child predators will offend on children, consume their innocence and escape justice until there can be no temporal escape from their crimes. This report detailed an account of a 70-year-old victim who came forward to report the devastating trauma of their youth. The victims of child sexual abuse never escape their victimization; it is inequitable and unjust to allow their victimizers to escape accountability.

Open a window to allow child sexual abuse victims to have their civil actions heard.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Pennsylvania legislature suspend the civil statute of limitations on sexual abuse claims for a designated and finite period of years. This relief would allow adults who were victims of child sexual abuse to have their cases heard in a court of law. The statute of limitations in effect leaves insufficient time to seek relief for crimes that are inherently underreported or are delayed in reporting.

The Grand Jury took testimony and reviewed evidence which showed many of the child sexual abuse victims who sought relief from the Allegation Review Board alleged conduct which was beyond the civil statute of limitations. The lives of child abuse victims are permanently altered by their assaults; they deserve to be made whole.

Organizations which have a history of secrecy in regards to child abuse allegations will consider meaningful reform when their failures have financial cost. Victims deserve the opportunity to seek a full and fair settlement, not as one Church official stated, "settle for what they can get."

Possible criminal conduct should be directly reported to law enforcement authorities.

The Grand Jury acknowledges that this report details incidents of law enforcement officials falling short of their oaths. However, the Grand Jury also notes that it was the efforts of dedicated law enforcement that finally exposed these decades of sexual violation unleashed on helpless little children.

The Grand Jury urges the victims of crime to report criminal activity to law enforcement. Many child predators offend again and again. These so-called men feed on innocence and are enabled by the hubris of apathetic administrators. Institutional leaders can make administrative changes with or following an action by law enforcement personnel to secure public safety. There is no member of the public in greater need of protection than our children.