

Narrator speaks... The pain is still fresh, and the anguish runs deep.

The Donovan family is fighting back from the day their lives turned into a nightmare: the day they learned that their priest had molested their daughter.

Identifying information of the victims and molesters has been changed.

Kimberly Donovan's mother had been a member of her parish since she was a child. Several years before the molestation, Mrs. Donovan began working in the parish office. As time went on she became close with the other staff and with the new pastor, Father Richard. She was pleased to be part of the community and to have the respect and friendship of the pastor. Father Richard always seemed to have plenty of time for the children of the parish, but some parents thought it was odd that he so clearly favored the girls over the boys.

Narrator speaks... And when child sexual abuse happens in a church community, the consequences are limitless.



Mrs. Donovan speaks... When our daughter was molested, it almost destroyed our parish and for a long, long time, it nearly destroyed my faith and the faith of my family.

Child molesters operate in all child-service organizations—including faith-based.⁴⁶

Victims of clergy sexual abuse report feelings of betrayal, isolation, depression, intense shame, self-blame, anger and loss of faith.⁴⁷

Abuse by trusted father figures has been found to be more damaging to victims than abuse by less-trusted molesters.⁴⁸

A 1992 survey of lay Catholics in the U.S. and Canada found overall support for the Church among Catholics was approximately 65 percent. However, in parishes where a priest has been accused of sexual abuse, support and satisfaction with the Catholic Faith drops to 34 percent. Parishioners also reported feelings of anger, disappointment, disgust, betrayal, disbelief, shock, sadness, grief and compassion.⁴⁹ Some Catholics also say that they leave the Church citing that the clergy sexual abuse scandals may have contributed somewhat to their decision.⁵⁰ Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate denoted that satisfaction with the Catholic Church hierarchy grew from 58 percent in 2004 to 72 percent in 2008.



Dr. David Finkelhor speaks...

All states have laws that require professionals who work with children to make reports of suspected child abuse. Many states require everyone to make such reports, not just of confirmed cases, but even if

they only have a suspicion. Some people find this hard. They're afraid that they may be wrong or that they may alienate someone, but courageous reports like that have rescued many victimized children from terrible torment. You can make reports anonymously and as long as you do so in good faith you can't get into any trouble.

Narrator speaks... You can find the phone number for the child abuse hot line through an Internet search. You can also find a Reporting Child Abuse link on the VIRTUS Online Homepage, at www.virtus.org.

A person who is required to make a report of child sexual abuse is a "mandated reporter." Most states recognize four distinct types of child maltreatment: neglect, physical abuse, psychological maltreatment and sexual abuse. The mandatory reporting laws for child abuse differs from state to state. All include protections by law for persons who make reports in good faith.

All individuals should be encouraged to review the laws for their individual state. A link to each state's reporting website is available on the VIRTUS Online™ homepage. Individuals who do not have Internet access may obtain the phone number for each state's child abuse hotline in the local phone directory.

If the suspected abuse involves a church volunteer, employee, or clergy member, then the caring adult should also notify a church official for various reasons. If there is a *concern about inappropriate behavior*, it must be communicated to the appropriate person who can act on the behavior and make a decision based on the organization's policy. Additionally, if there is a *suspicion of abuse* on behalf of someone who works or volunteers with children, then that person must be removed from public ministry with children until the situation has been resolved—and the suspicion of abuse must be delivered to the civil authorities and to the Church authorities as well. When communicating information relating to historical cases that become evident within the Church, it is important to follow these same procedures. Keep in mind that the civil authorities should also be informed about historical abuse as well, although some state's place a statute of limitations that include a "time limit" as to when abuse cases may be reported and addressed.

If the person to whom one should communicate is the actual person who is exhibiting suspicious behavior, then the individual should communicate to the next person person of greater authority, that is "higher up" in the chain of command.

Narrator speaks... If you are aware that a child is in danger of abuse at that moment, then call 911.

Narrator speaks... Communicating our concerns is perhaps the most difficult of the five steps. We must find the courage God has given us to speak up, and we must speak up before it's too late. You will never know if your courageous action to communicate your concerns will save one child's life, or protect dozens of lives.

Remember the five steps to protect children are:

1. Know the warning signs
2. Control access through screening
3. Monitor all ministries and programs
4. Be aware of child and youth behavior, and
5. Communicate your concerns

By practicing these steps we can make a difference in preventing child sexual abuse.

If the individual sees the abuse or has knowledge of abuse that is occurring, or has knowledge that the child is in imminent danger, the individual must call 911 immediately. Some refer to this as immediate or imminent abuse—abuse that is happening at that moment or about to happen.

Adults are reluctant to communicate their concerns for several reasons. Some of those reasons include:

1. Desire to avoid conflict or create problems.
2. Lack of proof.
3. Lack of certainty about how to respond.
4. Fear of repercussions or anger from the person.
5. Disbelief that the person could commit abuse.
6. Fear of civil liability, legal actions and procedures.