



Statement of the National Center for Victims of Crime in Support of a National Commission on Child Sex Abuse

November 16, 2015

In 1982, President Reagan appointed presidential commission on crime victims' rights. That panel's findings and recommendations helped to transform our nation's response to victims. It found that victims were an integral—though often overlooked—part of our criminal justice system, and that they should be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. In response, every state passed laws that recognized the rights of victims in criminal cases, positions for victim advocates were created to assist victims through the criminal process, and Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act, which uses fines paid by convicted criminals to fund services and compensation for victims. Thirty years ago, these ideas seemed revolutionary and were not immediately embraced by longtime criminal justice professionals who were skeptical and resistant to change. Today, there is near universal belief that victim advocates help facilitate the administration of justice, but that we all have a role to play in serving victims.

Today, we need the same type of national commission to forge a national commitment to address prevention, response and accountability for child sex abuse within institutions and organizations. Survivors of child sexual abuse experience an increased incidence of physical, psychological, emotional and substance abuse problems. With 25% of Americans having been sexually abused as children, it is clear that child sexual abuse is contributing to many of societies social problems.

This issue is about far more than the Catholic Church. We see sexual abuse in all types of faith communities, in schools, camps, scouting, and sports organizations. No one doubts that these institutions are well-intentioned and provide valuable services, but they cannot continue to bury their head in the sand as predators seek to join their organization as employees or volunteers so they can gain access to children.

We have been fighting for prevention, justice and accountability case by case and state by state. If we are to effectively address this problem, we must adopt a more unified approach across the nation. The National Center for Victims of Crime strongly supports the call for a National Commission on Child Sex Abuse.