

BOY SCOUTS' REQUEST TO KEEP SEXUAL ABUSE FILES CONFIDENTIAL DENIED BY FLORIDA JUDGE

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Boy Scout monument in Washington, D.C.

Photo by dbking via Flickr

In 1983, a young Boy Scout met with two of his scout leaders and some other scouts at TY Park in Hollywood. The boy, now a 40-year-old man, says the scoutmasters gave him and other scouts alcohol, showed them pornography, and had them run around naked. The scoutmasters eventually molested the boys, the victim says, during scouting events and even in the scoutmasters' homes. The various incidents of sexual abuse alleged by the victim are all detailed in a lawsuit against the Boy Scouts of America and the South Florida Council of Boy Scouts of America. The lawsuit also goes on to say that the Boy Scouts of America knew about the scoutmasters' abuse and covered it up to protect them and the organization.

But Miami-Dade Judge Jose M. Rodriguez of the 11th Judicial Circuit recently ruled that the Boy Scouts of America must turn over documents that detail incidents of sexual abuse.

Those internal files, which at one point were known as the "Perversion Files," had records of adult scout leaders who had been accused of sexual abuse by scouts. Since the 1980s, the Boy Scouts of America have been fighting to keep these records from being obtained and made public.

The victim in the Florida lawsuit, identified as GE DOE, says that his encounter at TY Park happened when he was only 8 years old, sometime in either 1983 or 1984.

"The TY Park incident was the beginning of me realizing something wasn't right with this, but you repress it and you don't say things because it's a scout leader and you're 8 years old," he said [via NBCMiami](#). "My only regret is that the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution has since expired."

The GE DOE lawsuit [was originally filed in 2014](#), but the Boy Scouts of America again filed for confidentiality to keep their files sealed even though, as the lawsuit states, the Boy Scouts of America knew that the scoutmasters were "engaging in inappropriate relations with boys and/or had a propensity to engage in sexual misconduct." The lawsuit goes on to say the organization "did nothing" to prevent the men from abusing the boys they were entrusted to lead.

However, in Rodriguez's ruling to deny confidentiality, the judge says, "Since child abuse thrives in secrecy, there is a compelling interest in producing these files as it increases transparency on the potential mishandling of sex abuse claims. A society interested in protecting

children from criminal assaults would not reasonably leave to the discretion of a children's social club the disclosure of information regarding criminal assaults on children."

Meanwhile, the Boy Scouts of America's communications director, Deron Smith, released a statement regarding GE DOE's lawsuit, saying, "While we can't discuss the lawsuit, the behavior included in these allegations runs counter to everything for which the Boy Scouts of America stands."

Smith goes on to say that in the decades since the victim says he was abused, the Boy Scouts of America have consulted with experts from law enforcement, child safety, and psychology to protect their scouts.

"Today, the BSA seeks to prevent child abuse through a comprehensive program of education on the subject, the chartered organization leader selection process, criminal background and other checks, policies and procedures to serve as barriers to abuse and the prompt mandatory reporting of any allegation or suspicion of abuse," Smith added.

David Clohessy, director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, says the ruling to deny the Boy Scout's request to keep their files confidential will make kids safer and deter child sex crimes and cover-ups.

"For far too long, our court system has seemingly valued the privacy of adults over the safety of kids. Ever so gradually, this trend is being reversed, and not a moment too soon," Clohessy says in an email statement. "We hope the disclosure of these files will prompt others who were sexually assaulted by Scout officials to come forward, expose predators, protect kids, and start healing. And we hope this ruling will prod other employers and institutions to 'come clean' about child sex crimes and cover-ups, since it's increasingly clear, as Martin Luther King said, that 'no lie lives forever.'"

GE DOE says he has suffered emotional and psychological injuries as a result of the abuse, according to the lawsuit. He is seeking damages in excess of \$15,000.

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