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## **ANOTHER ABUSE VICTIM TRIED TO ALERT PENN STATE TEN YEARS AGO, REPORTS NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

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**Washington, DC --** The National Center for Victims of Crime today reported that from 2001 to 2002, a victim of sexual abuse by a Penn State education professor tried unsuccessfully to alert administration officials about the abuse. Rather than investigate the victim's account and hold the abuser accountable, Penn State officials refused to act.



National Center for Victims of Crime executive director Mai Fernandez speaks at the Pennsylvania State Capitol on November 15, 2011

Paul McLaughlin of Phoenix, Arizona, was 11 years old when the sexual abuse by a Penn State education professor and two other men began. The abuse took place for four years in four states, including Pennsylvania, until 1981. Twenty years later, as he was recovering from the

psychological damage caused by the abuse, McLaughlin reported the abuse to officials at Penn State, where the professor was still employed. The university declined to investigate his charges, and McLaughlin could not seek justice in the Pennsylvania criminal or civil justice systems because the statute of limitations had expired.

"Although I had clear evidence of abuse by this professor, the university refused to act," said McLaughlin, who now advocates for better laws and policies to protect abuse victims. "At the time I was abused, there were no policies or safeguards in place at the university to prevent this kind of crime. Last week's arrest of Penn State coach Jerry Sandusky for the same kind of abuse suggests that little has changed. At Penn State and other institutions, witnesses can just ignore abusers, leaving them free to abuse children again and again."

"For too long, institutions have sought to protect their reputations by ignoring allegations of abuse," said Mai Fernandez, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. "Instead of explaining away or covering up these allegations, institutions can actually protect themselves and the people who depend on them by rooting out abusers and adopting policies to prevent abuse."

Institutions must act to protect themselves from harboring predators and to hold abusers accountable. Above all, they must launch a massive culture change that openly condemns abuse, requires reporting, and fosters responsibility. Otherwise, witnesses will continue to avoid reporting because they fear the personal, professional, and financial costs of doing so. Institutions can conduct full background screenings for prospective employees, especially those who work with young people. They can respond immediately to any allegations of abuse, making sure that victims report incidents and that these reports are investigated thoroughly. They can reward, encourage, and protect those who report abuse and penalize those who do not. Finally, in establishing new procedures to prevent abuse and hold abusers accountable, institutions can seek help from the National Center for Victims of Crime at (202) 467-8700, [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org).

States can also eliminate the statute of limitations for criminal and civil action on these crimes. Right now in Pennsylvania, the chair of the General Assembly Judiciary Committee is holding up a bill that would create a window of opportunity to allow child sex abuse victims to sue, no matter how long ago they were abused. Similar legislation passed in Delaware in 2007 resulted in civil suits that exposed many previously unreported predators. By eliminating the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse, states can allow victims to pursue justice and prevent future crimes.

"Institutions can best protect their reputations by preventing child sexual abuse and holding abusers accountable," said Fernandez. "By acting immediately, they can earn their good name and protect themselves from the kind of catastrophe now unfolding at Penn State."

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*The National Center for Victims of Crime, established in 1985, is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. For more than 25 years, the National Center has led this nation's struggle to provide crime victims with the rights, protections, and services they need to rebuild their lives. For more information, visit [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org).*