



Penn State's Sex-abuse Scandal Far From Unique

Yet, in reality, the only truly unique aspect of this tragic story is that it was reported at all.

It may be hard to imagine a sex scandal more troubling than the one we now see engulfing Penn State. Yet far larger is one we don't see: Child sexual abuse in American schools that is rampant, regularly covered-up and rarely reported.

While the media have provided copious coverage of the Catholic Church sex-abuse scandal, studies indicate that not only is child sexual abuse an ongoing problem in schools, it is also *100 times as common*. As LifeSiteNews.com [reported](#) last year:



According to Charol Shakeshaft, the researcher of a little-remembered 2004 study prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, "the physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests."

According to the 2004 study "the most accurate data available at this time" indicates that "nearly 9.6 percent of students are targets of educator sexual misconduct sometime during their school career."

Shakeshaft is a Hofstra University professor who was commissioned by the George W. Bush administration to research existing literature on the subject of educator sexual abuse. Her report is found [here](#).

An even [more recent study](#) was conducted by the Associated Press. After concluding a 7-month, 50-state investigation of the government-school system, the news outlet reported finding more than 2500 cases of abuse during a 3-year period. Moreover, many incidents go unreported, and many are handled in-house and hushed up with a see-hear-and-speak-no-evil attitude. This is so common, reports the AP, that the phenomenon is sometimes called "passing the trash" and involves abusers dubbed "mobile molesters." The latter term refers to teachers who quietly leave their old district for a new one — where they can resume their predatory activities without a paper trail giving them away. As Hillary Profita of CBS News [writes](#), "Could a creepy pedophile who isn't all over Fox News get hired? Richard Dangel, a child psychologist in Dallas, told the paper [*USA Today*], 'Only about 4% of offenders get busted,' he says. 'The other 96% don't.' Which means that background checks won't stop the vast majority of sex offenders."

Yet while school sexual abuse is more than one hundred times as common as that formerly plaguing the Catholic Church, Shakeshaft found that it has received hundreds of times less coverage. As Profita writes:

The federal report [Shakeshaft] said 422,000 California public-school students would be victims before graduation — a number that dwarfs the state's entire Catholic-school enrollment of



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143,000.

Yet, during the first half of 2002, the 61 largest newspapers in California ran nearly 2,000 stories about sexual abuse in Catholic institutions, mostly concerning past allegations. During the same period, those newspapers ran four stories about the federal government's discovery of the much larger — and ongoing — abuse scandal in public schools.

It would be a silver lining in the Penn State scandal if the story helped focus attention on the government-school abuse problem, but this seems unlikely. Many analysts point out that, unlike with the Catholic Church, the mainstream media are generally uninterested in investigating the educational establishment. And it's only big names such as Joe Paterno that grab headlines. Little anonymous victims don't.

Photo of Jerry Sandusky: AP Images



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