



## Preventing Child Abuse in the Wake of the PA Grand Jury Report on Child Abuse in the Roman Catholic Dioceses

By Tia DeShong, Volunteer Coordinator/  
Community Outreach Advocate

The release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report on child abuse in six Pennsylvania Roman Catholic diocese has filled our communities with shock, grief, and anger. The stories contained within of systematic abuse and cover-up are both alarming and distressing and it is normal to feel outraged, confused, or even plain sad.

While stories like this can leave us feeling helpless, know that there are very real steps that people are taking – or can take – to help prevent sexual violence in our communities and better serve victims when they come forward. Below, you can read about three things you can do to make a difference for the children around you:

Educate yourself about sexual violence, particularly the abuse of young children. It is more common than you think. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape reports that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will become victims of sexual abuse by their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. While the concept of “stranger danger” is ubiquitous in our popular lexicon to describe efforts to keep children safe, it is worth knowing that 93% of the time, a child knows his or her abuser. Few children report their abuse, particularly to their parents; it is far more common for someone to wait many years before coming forward, if they ever do at all.

Talk to your children, often and honestly, about their bodies, healthy relationships, consent, and personal safety. These conversations should be age appropriate, but also should not shy away from topics that can feel difficult to discuss. Teach them about “safe” and “unsafe” touches and help them to identify the private parts of their bodies. This includes the areas “covered by our swim suits” but can also include our mouths and hands. Talk to them about the touching rule – no one should ever touch the private parts of their body unless it is to keep them clean and healthy. This includes mom and dad. Finally, help your child to identify people they can reach out to if someone does or says something that makes them feel uncomfortable. We recommend that a child be able to name five such people, two of whom cannot be family members or close friends. Think “doctor” or “teacher.” The most important thing that your child keep in mind is that if the first person they tell does not believe them, **keep telling.**

Familiarize yourself with Pennsylvania’s Mandated Reporter laws. Pennsylvania classifies many adults as being required to make a report if they have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse. These adults are known as “mandated reporters” and include doctors, teachers, lawyers, members of the clergy, social service workers, foster parents, funeral directors, emergency medical service

providers, etc. Mandated reporters can report suspected child abuse via phone at the PA ChildLine: **1-800-932-0313** or online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>. Failure to report can result in fines, jail time, or loss of your professional license. Just because you are not classified as a mandated reporter *does not mean you cannot report.* So-called “permissive reporters” are those who are not required, but still encouraged, to report. To make a report as a permissive reporter, you may simply call the ChildLine. Permissive reporters can choose to remain anonymous if they wish. If anyone – mandated or permissive reporter – suspects that a child is in *imminent danger*, be sure to call 911.

Remember that no one faith or religious denomination is solely responsible for harming children; sexual abuse occurs in our homes, our schools, our churches, our workplaces – even on local college campuses or with big-name college sports programs. We are *all* responsible for helping to protect the children – and all victims -- in our area. If you have further questions about child abuse, talking to your children about personal safety, or Mandated Reporting laws, please reach out to us at PASSAGES at 1-800-793-3620. We offer many programs designed to educate children, their parents, and the community at-large about personal safety, sexual violence, and prevention. You can also visit our website at [www.passages-inc.org](http://www.passages-inc.org).

### Special points of interest:

- NEW STAFF INTROS!
- SUMMER RECAP
- BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
- REPORTING CHILD ABUSE
- EDUCATORS PREVENTING ABUSE

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## Reporting Child Abuse: It's for Everyone

By Paige Weber, Intern

If you saw someone driving down a busy town road going dangerously fast and putting other cars, passengers, and pedestrians in danger, would you call the police and report it? The majority of people would say yes. If someone's life was in danger or if they could be seriously harmed, then of course we would call the police. Sadly, though there are always things that stop us from calling. For example, what if you knew the person that was behind the wheel of that dangerous car? What if they found out you were the one that reported them? Someone people think that someone

else will probably report it so they don't have to. It may seem strange, but these thoughts run through most people's heads. The same thing happens when it comes to sexual assault. Whether it happened to you or someone else there are many reasons that you may not report it.

Statistics gathered by the U.S. Department of Justice state that 1 in 10 children are sexual abused, but only 30% of child sexual assaults are reported. Many people out there are mandated reporters, meaning that if they suspect or observe child abuse they are required to report it by law. Some examples are teachers, school employees, cler-

gy, counselors, therapists, and many others who are in charge of the care of vulnerable persons. Though these people are required by law to report, everyone who even suspects abuse should report it. It is very simple to report either by calling the local police department or going online to report with Child Protective Services. If you suspected abuse and reported it and turned out to be wrong, you won't receive a fine or get in any trouble for reporting. Let's stop shaking our heads and listening or spreading rumors about the family down the street and let's stop thinking others will call the authorities. Let's all become our own kind of mandated reporters.

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## Being a Good Bystander

By Tava Sue Jury, Corrections Counselor

The bystander effect is when individuals are less likely to intervene in a situation when others are present. There are believed to be two primary causes for the bystander effect: 1) the belief of the individual that others in the group will/have intervened (i.e. someone else will call 911); and 2) individuals in a group mirror the reactions of those around them (i.e. if most of the group is ignoring bullying behavior, the individual will as well). The bystander effect explains why groups of people turn a blind eye to wrong and hurtful behavior that is witnessed. We can combat the bystander effect by teaching children how to be positive and responsible bystanders and members of their communities.

[Here are some talking points for those conversations with children and adoles-](#)

cents:

-As a member of a community (a group of connected individuals such as a school/town/family), we have a responsibility (job/duty/obligation) to help one another.

-We would want someone to help if we were being bullied or mistreated in any way.

-It can be scary to be the only member of a group to act differently, but it is scarier for the person being bullied or mistreated.

Ways to intervene if you see someone being bullied or mistreated:

-Say to the bully(ies) and other bystanders: "That's not funny", "That's mean", "That's not right", "She/He looks upset", etc.

-Approach the child being bullied and be friendly and offer help

-Create a distraction (i.e. "What's everyone doing here?", "Hey, a teacher is coming this way", "Look at that game going on over there", etc.)

-Get/tell a safe adult

Ways to intervene if you hear about someone being bullied or mistreated after the situation has occurred:

-Do not laugh or offer any approval or encouragement/

-Say to the bully(ies)/story teller(s)/group: "That's not funny", "That's mean", "How would you feel if that were you?", "I bet he/she felt sad/mad/scared", etc.

-Approach the child who was being bullied and be friendly and offer help.

-Tell a safe adult.

The important thing is that we begin to have these conversations early and frequently so that we can shape our future communities and society.



On Saturday, September 8th, we held our 8th annual Funny Fundraiser in Clarion!

## New Staff Introductions

**Tava Sue Jury** recently joined PASSAGES, Inc. as the Corrections Counselor/Advocate. Before joining the PASSAGES, Inc. staff, she worked in a variety of professional capacities within the human services field since graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from York College of Pennsylvania in 2001. As the Corrections Counselor/Advocate, she provides counseling and advocacy services to victims and survivors incarcerated in prisons within Clearfield County. She was drawn to this position because she feels that incarcerated individuals are an underserved population and she is happy to be able to bring them the same support and advocacy that all sexual violence victims need and deserve, regardless of where they reside. She is excited to be part of the PASSAGES, Inc. mission and team to end sexual violence and to help victims/survivors of sexual violence. Outside of work, Tava Sue is the loving wife to her great husband, Michael, and caretaker of four furry children (three cats and one dog). She likes to cook, craft, and take day trips with her husband to various interesting towns and attractions in Pennsylvania.

**Alaina Shaffer** is the Prevention Educator for PASSAGES, Inc. She is a graduate of Penn State DuBois with a Human Development and Family Studies degree. During her last semester, she interned at the Child Advocacy Center of Clearfield County. There, she assisted investigators of child abuse cases in Clearfield County and learned the importance of victim advocacy. After observing numerous forensic interviews of child victims, she understands the complexity of childhood sexual abuse and the powerful influence of prevention. Alaina now works doing just that. She provides awareness and preventative programs for children, adults, and various professionals to guide the prevention of sexual violence. In her spare time, she is a volunteer at the Clearfield Arts Studio Theatre and spends time with her family. Alaina is thrilled to be a part of the PASSAGES, Inc. team!

**LeeAnn Holt** joined the PASSAGES, Inc. team as our Jefferson County counselor in August 2018 after working as a Mental Health Counselor at Clearfield/Jefferson County Crisis for two hours, and as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor at Abraxas Child and Youth services for two years. She has a Bachelors of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Lock Haven University. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends in nature.

**Maggie McCauliff** is the Clearfield County Counselor Advocate for PASSAGES, Inc. Maggie recently joined the team as of July of 2018. Prior to starting with PASSAGES, INC. Maggie attended Clarion University of Pennsylvania where she completed a Bachelor's of Science in Criminal Justice Administration, a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science, an Associates of Science in Criminal Justice, and a minor in Philosophy. Maggie is also currently working to finish her last course to complete a Bachelor's of Science in Biology. During her collegiate experience, Maggie was able to see various aspects of the criminal justice system by competing internships with the State College Police Department and Public Defender of Clarion County. Maggie has always wanted to have a career in which she is able to help people; and that's exactly what she has found at PASSAGES. Maggie loves being part of a wonderful team of people at PASSAGES, Inc. to help clients; and especially be able to represent PASSAGES, Inc. within the Multi-Disciplinary Investigation Team. Outside of work, Maggie enjoys spending her time with her boyfriend, Jeff, her family, friends, hiking, kayaking, spending time outside with her dogs, and volunteering with Tri-County Animal Rescue.



PASSAGES Legal Advocate, Robin McMillen, spoke at the launch for Penn Highland Dubois's new Safe-T Center, a telemedicine effort with Penn State designed to provide state of the art care for victims receiving the forensic rape examination.

### Did You Know?

Most of the time, a child victim of sexual violence knows their abuser. 37% of the time, the abuser is a biological parent.



In Clarion County:  
415a Wood St  
Clarion, PA 16214  
(814) 226-7273  
Fax: (814) 226-5766

In Jefferson County:  
18 Western Ave, Suite E  
Brookville, PA 15825  
(814) 849-5303  
Fax: (814) 849-8628

In Clearfield County:  
90 Beaver Drive, Suite 212D  
Dubois, PA 15801  
(814) 371-9677  
Fax: (814) 371-9679

24 Hour Hotline: 1800-793-3620

We're on the web!  
[www.passages-inc.org](http://www.passages-inc.org)



Prevention Educator, Ben, spoke at Clarion University's Black Student Union to raise awareness about sexual violence on college campuses!

**If you or someone you know needs to speak with a counselor, please call us 24/7, toll free at 1800-793-3620.**

## How Educators Can Detect the Warning Signs of Child Abuse

By Alaina Shaffer, Prevention Educator

As we enter the new school year, many things are rushing through our minds. Some questions we may reluctantly ask, 'How will I make it through this school year without losing my mind?' or, 'How many days until Christmas break, again?' More seriously, you may inquire: 'How will I be the best I can be for my students?'; 'How can my students have the best experience possible in my classroom?'; 'How can I keep my students *safe*?'

The answers to the first two questions vary, but one of the most essential ways an educator can keep their students safe is by being present and aware. Teachers have a unique relationship with children, as they are with them each day in a secure and structured environment. Educators are oftentimes able to recognize differences in behaviors with peers that students do not display at home. As 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are victims of sexual abuse before their

18<sup>th</sup> birthdays, teachers play a vital role in recognizing warning signs of child sexual abuse. Not only are all school employees mandated reporters—required by law to report any suspicions of child abuse—but they are many times expected to know the more indistinct behaviors that could predict a child is being sexually abused.

### **Warning signs that are essential for educators to know include:**

- Excessive talk or knowledge of sexual topics
- Regression to age inappropriate behaviors- i.e. thumb sucking, baby talk
- Not wanting to be left alone with or fearful of certain types of people, especially if it is a new behavior
- Excessive worry and mood swings
- Excessive touching of the genital area- i.e. scratching, rubbing, hands down the pants
- Inappropriate display of boundaries- i.e. continuing to touch, hug, or engage with other person when told "no" or to stop

### **Suspecting Child Sexual Abuse**

As mandated reporters, you must report all suspicions of child abuse. This means that even if you have only the slightest idea that a child could be a victim of abuse, a report has to be made. Once you suspect something may be going on, asking the child a few simple questions will help you determine the severity of the situation. A brief conversation will also guide you in including detail in your report. You may ask if the child feels safe at home, if they are worried about anything, or simply how they are feeling. If a child displays a behavior that is unusual for them, you may ask them why they think they are behaving that way. It is essential to remain calm and show compassion for the child while conversing with them. Ensuring the child that they are not in trouble and thanking them for talking with you will help them understand that you are a safe person to talk to.