



## **Sex Crimes Against Boys Often Go Unreported Because of Queasiness Among Males**

By [SUSAN DONALDSON JAMES](#)

Nov. 10, 2011

Sex crimes against boys, like the ones that allegedly occurred at Penn State University at the hands of former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky, often go unreported -- not just by educators and witnesses, but by the victims themselves -- because of the discomfort society feels about male-on-male assaults, particularly in the "hyper-masculine" world of sports.

Authorities say head coach Joe Paterno never went to police about Sandusky's alleged involvement with young boys, even after his graduate assistant coach told him he had witnessed an attack in the school's locker room back in 2002.

The graduate assistant, Mike McQueary, testified to a grand jury that he heard slapping noises and looked in the showers and saw a naked 10-year-old boy "with his hands up against the wall, being subjected to anal intercourse by a naked Sandusky."

But even McQueary, who was 28 at the time, only called his father and waited to report to Paterno the next day. "I don't even have words to talk about the betrayal that I feel," the mother of one of Sandusky's alleged victims told *The Harrisburg Patriot-News*.

Experts in child abuse say that Paterno and others could and should have done more.

"There is a certain stigma attached to male-on-male assaults," said Jennifer Marsh, hotline director for the [Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network](#) (RAINN). "We expect men to be protectors and we find it's much easier to discuss if it's a female victim.

"When a man is a victim it brings it more into their realm -- what if they were involved in this themselves?" she said. "It's certainly difficult for male victims to reach out and tell what happened, too. Loved ones shy away and feel uncomfortable."

More than 10 percent of all child abuse victims are male and nearly half of them are under the age of 18, according to RAINN. An estimated 93 percent of the victims know their attacker.

Frederic G. Reamer, a professor of social work from Rhode Island College, said that the male-dominated culture at Penn State, comparable to that of the Catholic Church, may make it harder to report these crimes.

"The parallels seem striking (head in the sand, massive denial, magical thinking about making this problem go away)," he wrote. "Note that the hierarchies in both settings are uniformly male. I suspect that's a factor. It has taken the church many years to engage in serious efforts to reform their protocol. I suspect Penn State will follow a similar path. It's tragic in so many ways."

But David Finkelhor, director of the [Crimes Against Children Research Center](#) at the University of New Hampshire, said that the lack of reporting goes beyond the discomfort society feels about sex crimes against boys.

"Even though we believe that we would do the right things, when confronted by the reality it is often more challenging than we think it will be," he said. "That's why we have laws to mandate people to do this. One of the biggest barriers is that people realize, especially when they have an offender who is part of their social network, the devastating impact reporting [a crime] is going to have, especially if you have affection for them."

Finkelhor said the same difficulty in reporting happens in families "when parents know that a brother or father is molesting a grandchild."

"They are aware of the devastating consequences for the offender and the family network as a whole," he said.

As for Paterno and the alleged Penn State cover-up, Finkelhor said, "These people had the whole kind of damage minimization that we saw in the Catholic Church -- to be concerned about the impact this would have on the school's football program."

Experts including Finkelhor also said training and planning how to report a sex crime is critical to supporting those who suspect wrongdoing. "I imagine the university doesn't have

interaction with a lot of persons under 18 and they might not have understood what their legal and moral responsibility was.

"I don't think the 'ick' factor as related to sex between boys might be a factor," he said. "I think you see the same kind of thing when girls are victims. It's something that we need laws for and planning for people to do the right thing. It's not enough to assume that a horrible thing offends anyone enough to do the right thing."

Sometimes, when an educator or parent is not an eyewitness, they hesitate to report a crime against a child, according to Finkehor.

"You don't want to do something irrevocable until you are absolutely sure what happened," he said. "But you are supposed to make a report even on a suspicion."

But male victims say that society is harder on them.

Allan Anderson was molested over a two and a half month period by a doctor at a fishing camp in Ontario when he was 9 years old, even as his parents and brother attended the camp. He was too embarrassed and ashamed to report the crime and wonders how many other boys endured the pain of molestation.

Anderson, who is now 52 and spent years in therapy, now runs a support group for male abuse victims in Minneapolis. He agrees there is an uneasiness that men feel about reporting crimes.

Our society doesn't see men very easily as victims," he said. "Or if we do, we are ambivalent about helping them."