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## **Investigating Sex Crimes Against Children: Private Entities Cannot Police Themselves!**

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I was encouraged when I read the [New York Times](#) account of the former Penn State President being found guilty of child endangerment due to not responding to allegations about Jerry Sandusky and his sexual abuse of children. All too often, private entities have turned their backs on child sexual abuse claims, disparaged the victims that come forward, conducted their own internal investigations and let the perpetrators remain free to continue the horrific abuse. [The USA Gymnastics scandal](#) involving Larry Nassar, MD is another example whereby the people in authority dismissed claims made by young gymnasts against this medical provider, leaving him free to continue his sexual abuse of young girls. At last count, 80 gymnasts have come forward describing abuse at the hands Dr. Nassar, the trusted team doctor.

It's no wonder that victims' claims are swept under the rug. These colleges and athletic associations risk embarrassment, loss of income and damage to their reputations. The fact that they are allowed to police themselves and NOT call local law enforcement to investigate - is damaging to children and must be stopped. We, as a nation concerned for the safety of children, should insist that whenever there is a sexual crime alleged against a child, that the institution be required to bring in the local authorities to investigate and not rely on their own in-house security team. Even if well-intentioned, in-house

authorities may not understand the nuances of child sexual abuse investigations so they would not be conducted properly.

Another example that is mind boggling to me is the status of this issue in New York State private schools. I am appalled that hundreds of thousands of children who attend private schools in New York State aren't included in protections under the current [Education Law 23-B](#) titled "Child Abuse in an Educational Setting." This law enforcement reporting mandate applies only to children in New York State public and charter schools. There is a double standard that leaves thousands of children at risk for child sexual abuse. It simply doesn't make sense.

Most parents who send their children to private schools in New York State probably do not realize that this is the case. Basically, the private school administrators can decide if they want to report the abuse to the local authorities — or not. And, we can probably assume that many private schools want to "keep it quiet" so as to not tarnish their reputation. There are deals made that the parents and law enforcement never know about. It's outrageous.

It's alarming that private schools, universities, athletic associations and other private organizations can essentially decide how to handle child abuse allegations internally. As noted above, we have witnessed the tragic results of actions where internal investigations protected perpetrators and resulted in countless additional children being subjected to child sexual abuse. It's time to ensure that all child abuse is reported directly to the law enforcement immediately. Zero tolerance must be the standard.

Whether it's a high school, a college, athletic association or other private entity, if a case of suspected child abuse is alleged, it should be immediately referred to outside public experts to investigate. That is the best way to ensure that abuse committed by their employees or volunteers is dealt with quickly and children are protected. These administrators should also not be allowed to withhold from law enforcement the fact that an allegation of child sexual abuse has been made against an employee in exchange for the person's resignation or voluntary suspension. This type of action simply leaves the perpetrator free to abuse again.

**Perhaps a good place to start would be to** require all institutions or associations that work with children -in any capacity- to follow the mandate of directly reporting to law enforcement if a sexual assault

against a child has been alleged. Administrators must be put on notice that they have a serious obligation to protect children, whether it is in a school setting, an athletic association or a summer camp on a college campus.

It's time to take action and hold all adults that oversee children's programs accountable.

The [New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty](#) to Children and The [American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children](#) – New York, are taking up this charge. My hope is that parents, teachers, coaches and administrators will join us and proactively put policies in place to expedite the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of child sexual abuse.