



Josh Kaul
Wisconsin Attorney General

P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2021

AG Kaul Issues Update on Statewide Inquiry into Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse

*Survivors are still encouraged to report abuse at SupportSurvivors.widoj.gov
or by calling 1-877-222-2620*

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul is providing an update today on the ongoing statewide inquiry into clergy and faith leader abuse, led by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), with support from district attorneys, survivor groups, and crime victim services professionals. The inquiry is ongoing and will take time to complete, so anyone with information still has ample time to report.

Survivors of clergy or faith leader abuse, their friends and family, or anyone who has information about how a religious organization has responded to reported abuse are encouraged to report that information to DOJ either online at SupportSurvivors.widoj.gov or by calling 1-877-222-2620.

“Victims services specialists are providing a safe, trusted place to report clergy and faith leader abuse. Many survivors have made reports, and some survivors are reporting abuse for the first time,” said Attorney General Kaul. “These reports are a critical part of our review of clergy and faith leader abuse.”

Since opening the inquiry, DOJ has received over 100 reports of abuse by clergy and faith leaders, or related to how a religious organization has responded to abuse. The reports have concerned clergy and faith leaders of multiple religious organizations as well as some reports of abuse not related to any religious organization. Some reports include claims against multiple abusers.

Page 1 of 2

DOJ receives reports online and by phone. The phone calls can provide a meaningful opportunity for survivors to share their report with a trained victim services professional. Many survivors have chosen to speak at length about their experience with a DOJ victim services professional, with some calls lasting more than two hours. In other cases, survivors chose to provide an abbreviated report or submit information through the DOJ online reporting tool. Ultimately, individuals contacting DOJ can choose how much information they want to share. Regardless of the information provided, each report is carefully reviewed by a multidisciplinary team comprised of law enforcement, victim services, and a prosecutor.

DOJ continues to gather information directly from survivors and their family, friends, and advocates through the contact number (1-877-222-2620) and the online submission form (available at SupportSurvivors.widj.gov). As part of the review, victim advocates and/or sensitive crimes investigators may follow up with survivors to conduct trauma-informed interviews. To the extent that further investigation is necessary to support potential prosecutions, with the victim's consent, DOJ will refer those cases to local law enforcement and district attorneys as appropriate.

Through this initiative, DOJ provides survivors of clergy and faith leader abuse with a safe and confidential means to obtain support from DOJ's Office of Crime Victim Services and referrals to available services.

The initiative also provides a confidential means for:

- survivors to report sexual abuse by clergy and faith leaders;
- others who have witnessed, know about, or suspect such abuse to report it; and
- people to report what they know about the response to or concealment of abuse by clergy and faith leaders.

For more information about the inquiry, including responses to frequently asked questions, please visit SupportSurvivors.widj.gov.