

Dept. of Justice: AG Kaul announces statewide inquiry into Clergy and faith leader abuse

Posted on Tuesday, Apr 27, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul is announcing today a statewide initiative, led by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), with support from district attorneys, survivor groups, and crime victim services professionals, which will review reports of clergy and faith leader abuse in Wisconsin.

Survivors, their friends and family, or anyone who has information about the church's response to abuse are encouraged to report clergy and faith leader abuse online at SupportSurvivors.widoj.gov or by calling 1-877-222-2620.

“The people of Wisconsin, and especially victims, deserve an independent review of clergy and faith leader abuse,” said Attorney General Kaul. “With this initiative, we are seeking to ensure that survivors of clergy and faith leader abuse have access to needed victim services, to help prevent future cases of sexual assault, and to get accountability to the extent possible.”

“Survivors are grateful to the Attorney General for his commitment to pursue justice for victims of clergy abuse and tell the truth about the full extent and impact of abuse and institutional concealment in Wisconsin's faith-based organizations. This initiative is the result of many decades of survivors courageously coming forward to tell their stories,” said Peter Isely, Program Director of Nate's Mission, and founding member of Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP).

This initiative will include an independent and thorough review of sexual abuse committed by clergy and faith leaders in Wisconsin, no matter when that abuse

occurred.

Through this initiative, DOJ will provide 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 will provide 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.

DOJ will gather information directly from survivors and their family, friends, and advocates through the contact number identified above and an online submission form at the website identified above. DOJ also hopes to receive documents and information from dioceses and religious orders in Wisconsin. 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.

DOJ has recently been in contact with the five Catholic dioceses in Wisconsin, as well as several religious orders with priests in Wisconsin, in order to inform them of this review and to discuss next steps.