

## 180 Women Reported Sexual Assault at Massage Envy Parlors



*Summary: More than 180 people stated that they were sexually assaulted during a massage session at a Massage Envy location.*

More than 180 people have alleged they were sexually assaulted at a Massage Envy franchise, according to BuzzFeed News. Massage Envy is a billion-dollar chain of massage parlors with almost 1,200 locations nationwide.

Susan Ingram shared with the publication that she was a client on May 2, 2015 when her masseuse James Deiter pushed his erection against her, groped her breasts, and then stuck his fingers inside her during a session. Ingram said she was so shocked by what had happened that she didn't say anything until her time was up. Then she drove home and cried.

Ingram said that once at home she called the Massage Envy location in West Chester, Pennsylvania to report what had happened but the manager did not take her allegation seriously so she called the police. The police quickly investigated Deiter, and he confessed that he had done this to several women many times before.

"I need help," Deiter said.

The next year, Deiter pled guilty to sexual assault of nine women while working at Massage Envy from 2014 to 2015. Two of the women told BuzzFeed News that they had also reported his actions to the parlor but management had done nothing because the women refused to come back to speak to them in person. When lawyers questioned the West Chester Massage Envy owner if he thought it was appropriate to demand that a sexual assault victim return to the scene of the crime, he said that he was acting within the franchise policy.

Buzzfeed News reported that the massage chain had more than 180 reports similar to what had happened to Ingram. And like Ingram, the chain allegedly mishandled most of the cases.

According to information from police reports, lawsuits, and state board complaints, dozens of women reported oral and digital penetration while clients at Massage Envy. BuzzFeed News said that there could be a bigger problem than what is actually reported.

"These claims represent only a sliver of the tens of millions of services Massage Envy says its franchises have provided. Still, lawyers for aggrieved spa clients told BuzzFeed News that there are more cases where women report abuse by massage therapists to police but no arrest is made, and that Massage Envy spas sometimes offer a settlement before a suit is filed, leaving no public record. Statistically, most victims of sexual assault don't report at all. Even Massage Envy's own orientation manual, discussing client satisfaction in general, has warned new employees that "Only 4% of upset customers will tell you when there is a problem," BuzzFeed wrote.

Massage Envy said that they could not respond point by point because of pending litigation, but they said overall they had stringent policies in place for hiring, screening, and training massage therapists.

"We hold franchise owners accountable to our policies and, when we say nothing is more important to us than treating clients with respect and giving them a safe, professional experience, we mean it," Melanie Hansen of Massage Envy said in an email to BuzzFeed News.

Buzzfeed News reviewed the chain's policies and said that they appear to protect the company and not the client. The publication spoke with a former employee who said Massage Envy encourages them to de-escalate the situation so that the police are not called, and the parent company has denied liability for what happens at its franchises.

However, this may change based on what happens at Ingram's civil trial in January.

"Massage Envy is a partner in crime," Ingram said. "They had every opportunity, on multiple occasions, to remove him from his position, and they chose not to."

Photo courtesy of New York Daily News

Source: [Buzzfeed](#)

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**What do you think of Massage Envy? Let us know in the comments below.**

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