

## Illinois State AG's Investigation Uncovers Over 2,000 Cases of Child Sexual Abuse



Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul released a shocking report on Tuesday, revealing that at least 1,997 children were sexually abused by 451 Catholic clerics and religious brothers in Illinois between 1950 and 2019. The number of abusers far exceeds the previously acknowledged count of 103 substantiated child sex abusers reported by the Catholic dioceses of Illinois. This alarming revelation has garnered significant attention from major news outlets such as the Associated Press, the Chicago Tribune, and the New York Times.

The report highlights that the religious brothers involved in the abuse primarily answer to independent religious orders rather than local dioceses. However, it is important to note that none of the named abusers are believed to be currently active in ministry, with an estimated 330 of them already deceased.

Comparisons drawn with the infamous 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report further emphasize the severity of the situation. The number of victims in Illinois surpasses those documented in Pennsylvania, where the grand jury report exposed over a thousand child victims abused by more than 300 priests.

To compile this comprehensive report, Raoul's investigators painstakingly reviewed over 100,000 pages of diocese documents, conducted interviews with diocesan leadership, and received over 600 confidential contacts from survivors. The survivors were interviewed, and their accounts formed the basis of the narrative descriptions provided in the report.

**Your salary is a reflection of your value to your employer. Make sure you're being compensated fairly by checking out LawCrossing's salary surveys.**

What emerges from these survivor narratives is a distressing pattern of the church failing to support survivors, either ignoring or covering up reports of abuse. Equally concerning is the church's tendency to retraumatize survivors when they come forward to report the abuse. The press release accompanying the report stated, "Repeatedly, church officials prioritized the reputation of the institution over protecting children."

The report emphasizes that by the time survivors disclose their experiences, the window for bringing criminal prosecutions or civil lawsuits has often closed, leaving them with limited legal recourse. While these perpetrators may never face accountability in a court of law, the report's aim is to publicly expose their actions and provide a measure of healing to survivors who have suffered in silence for far too long. Raoul expressed this sentiment in the press release, stating, "By naming them here, the intention is to provide a public accounting and a measure of healing to survivors who have long suffered in silence."

The investigation was initiated in 2018 by Raoul's predecessor, Lisa Madigan, and has since uncovered the shocking extent of the abuse. In response to the report, the Illinois archdioceses issued a joint statement, acknowledging the need for policy review and implementation of necessary changes. The state attorney general's press release highlights that the archdioceses have adopted uniform policies to enhance the handling of alleged child sex abuse cases.

Cardinal Blase Cupich, in a statement on behalf of the Archdiocese of Chicago, claimed that policies and programs addressing child sexual abuse and supporting survivors were implemented as early as 1992.

The release of this report marks a significant milestone in shedding light on the widespread child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church in Illinois. It serves as a call to action for the church to prioritize the safety and well-being of children over institutional reputation and to provide the necessary support and justice to the survivors of these horrific crimes.