



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dear Editor,

I wanted to express thanks to Magistrate Hejmanowski for his November 11th article “The Nittany Nightmare.” Unfortunately, the recent story from Penn State highlights what we already know to be true about child sexual abuse: most of the time the perpetrator is known to the child (over 90% of the time) and is often someone the family and child trusts, boys and girls are vulnerable to abuse- research shows that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18, & if there is a disclosure or abuse is suspected or observed, we as adults too often fail to act on behalf of children. It is absolutely critical that we look at the circumstances and environment across our culture which allows child sexual abuse to occur and institutions which may not take action, in order to limit further opportunities for harm. There are steps we can take to better protect children in our own community. As adults, we can become better educated about abuse, learn to more readily recognize offender behavior, take the necessary steps to intervene when we see something we hear or see something that doesn't seem appropriate, and foster open communication with our children. We can work together to ensure that all of the places we work, live, and play are more easily monitored to deter perpetrators.

In this current situation, given all the media attention, it's important to remember that the people who we should be most concerned about are the children and families who were victimized. Children and their families have not only been hurt by the sexual abuse that occurred but may also be harmed by insensitive and/or victim-blaming statements following disclosure. Additionally, any individual who has experienced or is experiencing sexual abuse may be harmed by these same statements. For these reasons, it's imperative for us to speak up on behalf of victims/survivors and work to hold offenders accountable.

As Magistrate Hejmanowski stated, any suspected abuse should be reported immediately to authorities. There are also steps that can taken to prevent abuse before it occurs. To learn more about how, e-mail violenceprevention@helplinedelmor.org or call Nancy at 740-363-1835 ext. 109. In addition, local, state, and national support services for those who have experienced Child Sexual Abuse exist. HelpLine can help you find those resources and provide support along the way by calling 2-1-1 or 1-800-684-2324.

Susan Hanson
Executive Director
HelpLine of Delaware & Morrow Counties

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About HelpLine

HelpLine of Delaware and Morrow Counties, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization that provides a 24-hour support and information line, prevention education and serves as the area's only volunteer center. Committed to empowering people through knowledge, support and resources, HelpLine responds to the emotional, financial and informational needs of the Delaware and Morrow County communities.

HelpLine is a contract provider of the Delaware-Morrow Mental Health & Recovery Services Board and partially funded by the Council for Older Adults. A United Way Agency, HelpLine is accredited by the American Association of Suicidology, National Alliance of Information & Referral Systems and certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health. For more information, please visit: www.HelpLinedelmor.org.