

3.6 SERIAL ABUSERS: PRIESTS WITH MULTIPLE ALLEGATIONS

Many individuals who commit a sexual offense, such as child sexual abuse, do so as a result of situational or impulsive factors. These are often single-victim offenders who may never repeat their crime or may repeat the act only if the same or similar circumstances recur. For example, such individuals may only act out when their controls are reduced due to intoxication, when experiencing significant situational stress, or when an opportunity is present. Thus, their behavior is often unplanned and considered a "regression," triggered largely—but not entirely—by external conditions.

However, there is a much smaller number of serial sex offenders who act out not as a result of the effects of external stress or a weakening of inhibitory controls; instead, they behave in a more methodical fashion using a high degree of planning. In these cases, there is a strong compulsion to act—a compulsion derived from a fixation on the type of victim desired and the type of acts performed. These offenses are often preceded by years of intense fantasy in which the act is rehearsed and strategies are developed. Offenders of this type have a very high potential to repeat their crimes. Such individuals can be quite manipulative in the way they approach victims and in the methods they employ to avoid apprehension. Because their crimes are highly planned and often target particular types of victims, they may abuse large numbers of children before they are apprehended.

Those priests who have been accused of abusing a large number of young people have attracted significant, often sensationalized, nationwide attention. These cases are frequently discussed along with the cases of those priests who have been transferred from diocese to diocese and who have continued to be accused of sexual abuse of youth under 18. Data from this study has found these two groups to be different in many aspects. Those priests who have ten or more allegations differ in many respects from the average for all priests in the study, but this is not as true for the group having allegations in more than one diocese or religious community. The study received 149 surveys for priests who had ten or more allegations of child sexual abuse—although if potential allegations (from potential victims known to the diocese) are included, the number of priests is 252. After careful analysis, 143 priests out of the total number of 4,392, were identified as having been the subject of allegations in more than one diocese. Of that group, nine had allegation made in three dioceses and one priest was accused of sexual abuse in four dioceses.

- The group of 149 priests, the "10+ group," account for 26% of all incidents reported in the study. The 143 priests who were accused in more than one diocese, the "Transfers," had a lower rate of accusation, but account for 8.7% of all incidents reported in the study (see Table 3.6.1).
- The group of 143 priests who received accusations in at least two dioceses or religious communities were more likely to be identified with substance abuse and behavioral problems and more likely to be reported to the police. Overall, 64% of the "Transfer" group saw their ministry restricted.

Table 3.6.1 PRIESTS WITH MULTIPLE ALLEGATIONS:
COMPARISON OF TWO GROUPS

	Transfers (N=143)	10+ Group (N=149)	All Priests (N=4,392)
Total Allegations	992	2,960	11,404
	8.7%	26%	100%
Median for Allegations, per Priest	4	14	1
Allegations And Potential Allegations	1,078	3,248	4,840
	9.5%	28%	100%
Substance Abuse	30%	22%	18.7%
Behavioral Problems	36%	33%	23%
Ministry Restricted	64.5%	53.7%	27%
Police Contact	7.6%	4%	14%
Charged with a Crime	4.6%	3%	3%

These data are taken from the Cleric Surveys. The total number of allegations reported there exceeds the number of Victim Surveys received.

The Cleric Survey asked for the total number of allegations that had been made against a priest or deacon in the responding diocese or religious community. It also asked for the number of other incidents not yet reported that were associated with or suspected of a particular priest.

The distribution of the number of allegations per priests is similar for diocesan and religious priests except with respect to 10+ group. There are only 14 religious priests in the 10+ group of 149.

Table 3.6.2 SERIAL ABUSERS BY CLERICAL STATUS

No. of Allegations	Diocesan Priests		Religious Priests	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	1,752	54%	558	61%
2 - 3	883	27.2%	244	26.7%
4 - 9	476	14.6%	99	10.8%
10+	135	4.2%	14	1.5%
Total	3,246		915	