

They were accused of sexually abusing children, now they're

# THE PRIEST NEXT DOOR

SKIP INTRO

Thousands of Catholic priests were accused of sexual abuse, then what happened? An investigation reveals most have become the priest next door.

**Lindsay Schnell and Sam Ruland, USA TODAY Network**

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*Warning: This story includes accounts of reported child sex abuse. Help for abuse victims is available at the [Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](#) at 800-4-A-CHILD or 800-422-4453.*

**S** UNRISE, Fla. – John Dagwell said he’s earned the right to live in peace as he tries to put his past behind him.

The former Roman Catholic brother, 75, pleaded guilty in a New Jersey criminal case in 1988 to molesting a student when he taught at a parochial school. His religious order, the [Xaverian Brothers](#), transferred him to the Boston area, where he went to work in a homeless shelter and soon faced new abuse accusations that were never reported to police. Four years later, personnel files from the [Boston Archdiocese](#) revealed Dagwell as a clergyman accused of sexual abuse. His name was also included in a list [released by the Xaverian Brothers](#).

Despite his past, Dagwell was never required to register as a sex offender. He moved on to a new life in a new community, a place where children fill the local pool during school vacations and where his history remained a secret from neighbors. He began teaching again, this time at [Keiser University](#), a 16,000-student school based in Fort Lauderdale.

“I’ve stayed away from adolescents. I’ve been trying hard not to put myself in a situation where I was going to be tempted,” Dagwell said recently while sitting in an apartment he shares with his sister. As he spoke, three teddy bears sat on his television and a half-dozen stuffed Disney dolls – Mickey Mouse, Goofy, Jiminy Cricket – were carefully arranged on a China cabinet.

Dagwell is one of more than 1,200 former priests, Catholic brothers and Catholic school officials identified in a USA TODAY Network investigation who were accused of sexual abuse but were able to move on with little or no oversight or accountability. Most never faced criminal charges.

As thousands of abuse victims across the U.S. continue to search for justice and closure decades after being molested by some of the most trusted people in their lives, these men have become the priest next door. They live near schools and playgrounds, close to families and children unaware of their backgrounds or the crimes they’ve been accused of. In some cases, they’ve taken on leadership roles in new communities, becoming professors, counselors, friends and mentors to children. Their movements are unchecked by both the government and the Catholic Church in part because laws in many states make it nearly impossible for victims to pursue criminal charges decades after alleged abuse.



A parishioner prays during communion at the "Mass of Forgiveness" at the Cathedral Parish of Saint Patrick in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in August 2018.

TY LOHR, YORK DAILY RECORD

During its nine-month investigation, the USA TODAY Network tracked down last known addresses for nearly 700 former priests who have been publicly accused of sexual abuse. Then, 38 reporters knocked on more than 100 doors across the country, from Portland, Oregon, to Long Island, New York, with stops in Philadelphia, Chicago, Indianapolis, Miami and more. They talked with accused priests, as well as neighbors, school officials, employers, church leaders and victims. They reviewed court records, social media accounts and church documents in piecing together a nationwide accounting of what happened after priests were accused of abuse, left their positions in the church and were essentially allowed to go free.

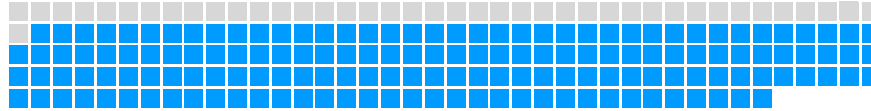
Since the scandal first [exploded into public view in Boston](#) almost 20 years ago, the church has financially settled with thousands of victims, claimed bankruptcy at parishes across the country and watched disaffected [congregants flee its pews](#). The church has promised change, with parishes posting [guidelines aimed at protecting children](#) and dioceses [releasing names of credibly accused priests](#) – many of whom were defrocked, or laicized, meaning they no longer work with the church. But a church spokeswoman demurred when asked if the church is under any obligation to keep track of accused priests, or to inform future employers of the accusations against them.

“The [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) does not maintain a list of accused priests, as we do not oversee the dioceses,” said Chieko Noguchi, public affairs director of the organization that represents the top Catholic leaders in the United States.

In building its review of priests, the USA TODAY Network worked initially from information gathered by [BishopAccountability.org](#), a database of publicly accused priests that also includes files on bishops, and documents from church leadership on the abuse crisis. Reporters used this database in addition to information made available by dioceses because the church [has a history](#) of leaving priests off of lists of credibly accused clergy, an issue that has drawn scrutiny from [survivors' groups](#) and victims' advocates.

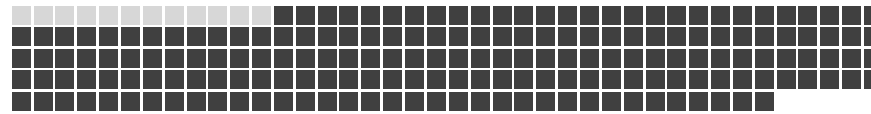
## There are 195 US archdioceses and dioceses in the US ...

**154** have released lists of "credibly accused" clergy



SOURCE Jeff Anderson & Associates PA as of Nov. 11

**183** face accusations of sexual abuse by clergy



SOURCE [BishopAccountability.org](http://BishopAccountability.org)

To be sure, some of the accused priests may be innocent. They face allegations, not convictions. In fact, what it means to be “credibly accused” varies by diocese. But advocates who argue for full disclosure say that because it typically takes a child sex abuse victim [decades to come forward](#), state statute of limitation laws – which limit the time frame for initiating criminal and civil cases – must be reformed. And if the priests are charged and convicted, the public should be notified. Advocates point out that if these men were registered sex offenders, most would have residency restrictions imposed on them.

“Common sense would say pedophile priests would continue to abuse once they are defrocked,” said Mitchell Garabedian, a [Boston-based attorney](#) who has represented thousands of Catholic sex abuse victims across the world. “There is nothing to keep them from sexually abusing children – it is not as if a light switch turns off.”

Marci Hamilton, who runs the Philadelphia-based think tank [CHILD USA](#), a nonprofit working to end child abuse, said she wasn’t surprised that in many cases, former priests accused of child sexual abuse are living openly next to schools and day care centers.

Hamilton said the church clearly knew the consequences of letting former priests move on quietly after abuses were reported but did so to shield the church and protect its image.

“They cover it up, they run the statute of limitations and then they wash their hands of them,” Hamilton said of the Catholic Church. “It’s never been enough to say, ‘Well, we laicized him,’ or ‘we expelled him.’ It’s like they had a firecracker and they threw it into the public square.”



**They cover it up, they run the statute of limitations, and then they wash their hands of them. ... It's like they had a firecracker and they threw it into the public square.**

Marci Hamilton, about the Catholic Church. Hamilton runs CHILD USA, a nonprofit working to end child abuse.

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### **'He should be on that list'**

In Florida, Dagwell taught students for 15 years at Keiser University before retiring in 2018. Dagwell claimed the judge in his New Jersey criminal case didn't tell him to register as a sex offender, and his plea came before national laws required both registry and notification.

"I knew the students were going to be 18 and over," he said. "And really, the average age is more like 28, 29."

He said he went to an addiction center for counseling and attended weekly sessions with a psychologist for 10 years.

"I've put years of penance on myself," Dagwell said.

But neighbors said his comments ignore the fact that children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, are constantly visiting residents at his Sunrise, Florida, community.

"He should be on that" sex offender's list, said Gerald Steindan, 74, who lives one building over. "If he's guilty, he should be on it. Simple as that."

Keiser University said Dagwell served as an instructor "without incident." Dagwell said university officials somehow learned of his past shortly after he started there, and allowed him to continue teaching. But when asked about that decision, the university sidestepped the question, saying only that Dagwell did not disclose his criminal history when he was hired.

"Mr. Dagwell is a former employee and never disclosed any history or past felony or misdemeanor charges on his employment application," Associate Vice Chancellor Kelli Lane said in a statement.



## **They were sexually abused as children by Catholic priests, now they're seeking justice (4:55)**

A USA TODAY Network Investigation found nearly 700 former Catholic priests accused of abuse. Some have moved on, while their victims seek justice.

PAUL KUEHNEL, USA TODAY NETWORK

In nearby Miami, Kenneth Ward is a former high school teacher and dean of students who had been accused of sexually assaulting multiple young boys during his tenure at two area Catholic schools, Monsignor Edward Pace High School and Christopher Columbus High School. Ward was never charged with a crime.

Ward entered into a settlement agreement in 2013 to resolve a civil lawsuit by former students claiming abuse. The deal was brokered by attorneys for the Miami Archdiocese and the Marist Brothers religious order that placed him at the schools. After leaving the high schools, Florida state records show, Ward obtained a nursing license in 2012. According to media reports and a LinkedIn profile that matches his work history, Ward is now a behavioral and mental health nurse in Fort Lauderdale, working with adults and adolescents. The profile highlights his work as the director of a summer camp and boasts that he was a “successful classroom teacher.”

The USA TODAY Network tried to contact Ward at his apartment and through the attorney who represented him in the civil suit filed by his former students, but he did not respond.

Olga Ugartechea, a real estate agent who lives by Ward, regularly checks Florida’s sex offender registry when showing off homes. She said it’s inconceivable that a settlement in a civil suit – which often results in monetary penalties but never in someone being put on the sex offender registry – is all it takes to ensure someone’s name is not included on the registry.

“No amount of money should be able to hide your past,” she said. “That has to be public.”

In Bradenton, Florida, former priest Russel Banner declined to speak with a reporter when asked about multiple sexual abuse allegations that led to his being placed on leave in 2002 by the [Cleveland Diocese](#), and laicized in 2015. In 2004, a man accused Banner of molesting him “more than 100 times” from the ages of 12 through 14 when he lived at Parmadale Children’s home, a Cleveland orphanage where Banner worked as a counselor, [according to The Plain Dealer](#). Banner denied the allegations at the time.

Now 82, Banner lives in a condo complex across the street from Rowlett Middle Academy, a public charter middle school. His home has access to a balcony area that overlooks the school grounds.

School principal Jamara Clark was surprised he’d never heard of accusations against Banner and that the former pastor lived so close to the school. The principal said a listing of all types of offenders, even if they were stripped of their clerical rights rather than prosecuted, would be helpful.

“As schools, we need to consider all avenues that would ensure the safety of our kids,” he said. “And this would be one of them.”

## **Advocates fight for statute of limitation reform**

Pennsylvania state Rep. Mark Rozzi never planned to tell anybody the truth.

At 13, crippled by shame, he vowed to keep silent about the abuse he endured at the hands of the Rev. Edward Graff, a priest at his parochial school in Berks County, Pennsylvania. The details – how Graff used McDonald’s,



beer and pornography to befriend him, before raping him in the shower one day in 1984 – haunted Rozzi.

According to law enforcement officials, Graff was transferred to a diocese in Texas in 1993. In 2002, he was arrested for allegedly sexually abusing a 15-year-old boy. He died that year while in custody awaiting trial.

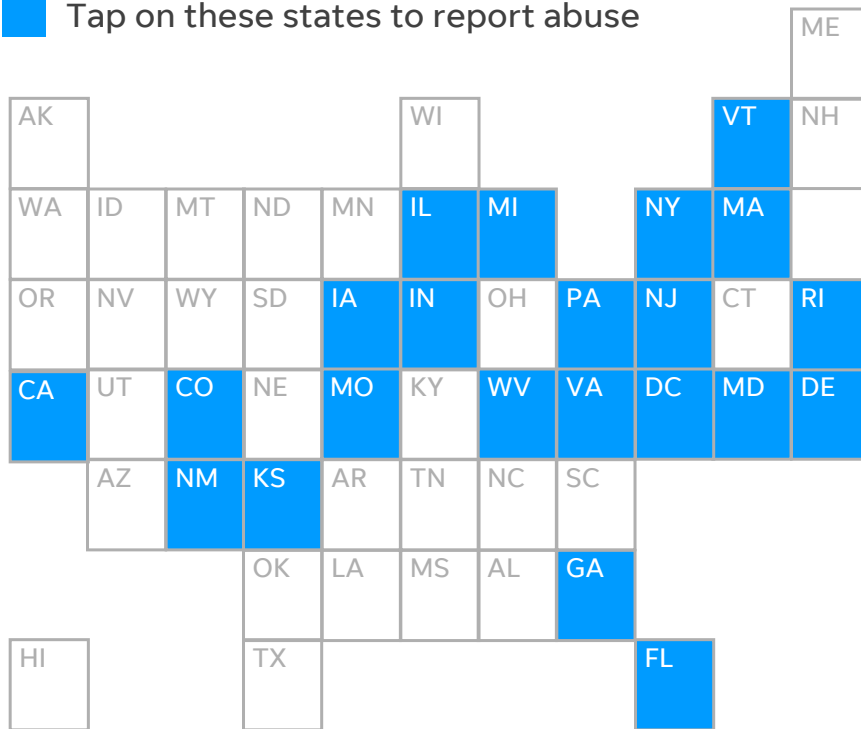
When another of Graff's victims killed himself in March 2009, Rozzi knew he had to come forward.

“I thought I could heal myself,” Rozzi said, “but unfortunately that’s not how it works.”

A member of the state Legislature since 2013, Rozzi pushed for reform even before the Pennsylvania attorney general released a grand jury investigation in August 2018 that revealed 301 priests who had allegedly abused more than 1,000 children in the commonwealth, dating to the 1940s. The investigation included only six of the state's eight dioceses. Many of those priests had never before been publicly identified.

## 22 states conducting investigations into clergy sex abuse

Tap on these states to report abuse



SOURCE CHILD USA

Rozzi, 48, is currently working on statute of limitation reform legislation that has passed the Pennsylvania House, and is awaiting action in the Senate. Meanwhile, attorneys general in 21 [other states have launched official investigations](#) into sexual abuse that took place in the Catholic Church.

Reform has been [met with plenty of resistance](#), much of it from the Catholic Church itself.

In 2014, California passed a bill authored by state Sen. Jim Beall that allowed victims to file criminal charges until they turn 40. (Previously, they had to be 26 or younger.) Beall said private organizations including the Catholic Church spent “millions of dollars lobbying against my bill,” with bishops and priests around California speaking out against it directly – including at the parish his mother attends.

On Oct. 13, California passed legislation that raises the civil statute of limitations to 40 years old, too.

In New York, the Child Victims Act went into effect Aug. 14, giving victims a one-year period to file civil lawsuits from abuse that happened decades ago. By lunchtime that day, [nearly 400 lawsuits](#) had already been filed.



New York Sen. Brad Hoylman, D-Manhattan, center, flanked by former Assemblywoman Margaret Markey, left, and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, D-Yonkers, right, stands with survivors and advocates speaking in favor of passing legislation authorizing the Child Victims Act during a news conference at the state Capitol in Albany, New York, on Monday, Jan. 28, 2019.

HANS PENNINK, AP

“Survivors have not been believed for generations,” said state Sen. Brad Hoylman, who led reform. “It’s our responsibility as legislators to change that, and give them their voice, and an attempt at justice.”

Other advocates have concerns.

Since New York passed its law, Donna Lieberman, executive director of the [New York Civil Liberties Union](#), has been outspoken about the need to balance justice for victims with justice for the accused. She touts statutes of limitation as “critical cornerstones of the legal system,” pointing to issues such as fading memories and disappearing witnesses – which can impede someone’s right to a defense.

“Criminal exposure 20 years after the fact makes it close to impossible to defend against allegations,” Lieberman said. “Where were you on Dec. 3, 2016? Who was around to corroborate that?”

Many, but not all, states limit where registered sex offenders can live, often requiring offenders to avoid or stay 500-2,000 feet away from places like schools, day care centers and playgrounds. Critics say these rules make it impossible for many offenders to find safe housing, forcing some to become homeless.

“Let’s be honest: We’re not sentencing you to 30 days or 60 days or a year or five years; we’re sentencing people to a life in exile,” Lieberman said. “And that’s not really appropriate.”

But Mae Flexer, a state senator [who pushed for statute of limitations reform](#) in Connecticut, said people who harm children should face tough punishments.

“For far too long, our law has been in favor of allowing abusers to continue their abuse, and allowing institutions to perpetuate it,” Flexer said. “It’s time for the pendulum to swing in the opposite direction and stand with victims for a change.”

## How can a ‘nice guy’ abuse kids?

Roger Rudolf was first named in the [Indianapolis Archdiocese’s list of credibly accused](#) priests in October 2018. He is believed to have one victim, whom he allegedly abused from 1987 through 1988, according to the Archdiocese. He was removed in 2002 and laicized in 2015.

Now he lives in Greenwood, Indiana, an Indianapolis suburb, in a neighborhood near children, which concerns Jennifer Brissey, 48, whose family moved into the neighborhood about three months ago. After learning about the accusations against Rudolf from a reporter in mid-October, she turned to her 10-year-old son.



**Survivors have not been believed for generations. It’s our responsibility as legislators to change that, and give them their voice, and an attempt at justice.**

New York Sen. Brad Hoylman, D-Manhattan

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“You don’t go outside without me,” she directed him. “I know you’re a big boy, but –”

“I can knock him out,” her son replied.

Rudolf could not be reached for comment.

Neighbors elsewhere didn’t seem as worried about priests accused of sexual misconduct.



Survivors comfort each other while Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro outlined the findings of the grand jury investigation into six Catholic dioceses in the state Aug. 14, 2018. The grand jury's report detailed child sexual abuse and cover-up by more than 300 clergy.

TY LOHR, YORK DAILY RECORD

In Venice, Florida, Wally Cabral was surprised to hear that a neighbor he's been friendly with had been accused of sexual abuse.

Donald Walk served in the Miami Archdiocese for years, and at one point he worked as chaplain for the NFL's Miami Dolphins. Walk was named in a July 2006 settlement with the Miami Archdiocese, and in a separate 2007 civil suit, [accused of abusing an altar boy](#) in the late 1970s.

Walk, 85, now lives at a one-story beige home, where he declined to speak with a reporter about the accusations against him.

"You're asking these very, very worldly questions," he said.

Walk – who neighbors said has lived at the house for at least 14 years – said sexual abuse happens in all kinds of work places, "even in newspapers."



### **Most priests accused of sexually abusing children were never sent to prison. Here's why**

[Read more](#)

Residents said few children live in the neighborhood, but that Walk told them he didn't care for youngsters anyway.

"He said kids bring too many problems," said Anatoli Kossintsev, a neighbor.

Cabral, 47, said he won't let Walk's alleged past color his friendship with the former priest. Cabral described Walk as friendly and engaging, and said Walk often gives gifts to Cabral's wife and children. When Hurricane Irma pummeled Florida in September 2017, Walk stayed with the Cabral family.

Cabral said he would typically be concerned about sex abuse allegations, "but I know him."

Retired FBI Special Agent Ken Lanning, who has spent 40 years studying child sex abuse and the people who commit it, has heard some version of that – "I know this guy, he wouldn't do it" – for most his career.

"Lots of people from my generation tend to look at this black and white, good and evil," said Lanning, 75. "They don't see all the subtleties – how can this nice guy, who I invited over for dinner and who prayed with us when grandma was dying, be a child molester?"

“The only thing that surprises me is how we can keep being surprised that nice guys are doing this.”

Despite some admissions of abuse and settling with victims across the country, many of the priests who spoke to the USA TODAY Network took a dismissive attitude when asked about the past.

Even after a 1994 lawsuit accused him of raping a teenage boy multiple times over a three-year period, Edward Igle remained in ministry in the Camden, New Jersey, diocese until 2000. His victim, who has since died, told The Philadelphia Inquirer in 2005 that he received a \$7,500 settlement. In 2011, another man came forward and also accused Igle of abuse. In February, Igle's name was included on a list of credibly accused priests [released by the Camden Diocese](#).

A longtime social worker, Igle is currently a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Igle was also until recently listed as a faculty member at [Philadelphia's Child and Family Therapy Training Center](#), where he has lectured on, among other things, sexual abuse.

In a conversation with the USA TODAY Network in late October, Marion Lindblad-Goldberg, the director of the center, claimed that Igle hadn't worked for her since 1992. But in 2015, [Lindblad-Goldberg told The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) that Igle had told her about the accusations, said he was innocent and that she believed him. She praised him then Igle as a terrific teacher.

“If I had known what I know now, I wouldn't have let him work for us,” Lindblad-Goldberg told the USA TODAY Network, adding that she was out of the country when the Camden diocese released its list in February. “We try to help children, not rape them.” The day after her conversation with the USA TODAY Network, Lindblad-Goldberg removed Igel's name and headshot from the center's website.

“

**The only thing that surprises me is how we can keep being surprised that nice guys are doing this.**

Retired FBI Special Agent Ken Lanning

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## Teaching Faculty



**Marion Lindblad-Goldberg**  
Ph.D. (Psychology), Licensed Psychologist (PA),  
LMFT, AMFT-Approved Supervisor.

Professional experience includes: research,  
teaching, publications, and clinical practice.

**Current position:** Philadelphia Child and  
Family Therapy Training Center Director,  
Clinical Professor of Psychology, Department  
of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania  
School of Medicine.



**Steven G. Simms**  
Ph.D. (School Psychology), Licensed Psychologist  
(PA), LMFT, AAMFT Supervisor Candidate.

Professional experience includes: in the areas  
of clinical practice, teaching, and supervision.

**Current Position:** Philadelphia Child and  
Family Therapy Training Center Co-Director.



**Pinky Mehta**  
(Marriage and Family Therapy) LMFT, AAMFT-  
Approved Supervisor Candidate

7 years of clinical experience, ESFT  
supervisor for 4 years.

**Current Position:** Assistant Program Director,  
Family Based Mental Health Services  
(Montgomery, Berks, and Chester Counties,  
PA).



**Edward A. Igle**  
MSW (Clinical SocialWork), LCSW, LMFT, AAMFT-  
Approved Supervisor

38 years of professional experience in clinical  
practice, teaching, and supervision;

**Current Position:** PCFTTC Faculty.

A screenshot from the Philadelphia Child and Family Therapy Training Center lists Edward Igle as part of the teaching faculty.

SCREENSHOT

Igle, now living in a quiet neighborhood of Millsboro, Delaware, denied the accusations against him, claiming he'd left the priesthood of his own accord "for personal reasons." The Camden Diocese Bishop, Dennis J. Sullivan, indicated Igle was removed because of sexual abuse allegations.

"This curiosity you have, it hurts people," Igle told a reporter.

In Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, former priest Thomas Skotek retorted, "I've moved past this" when approached by a reporter.

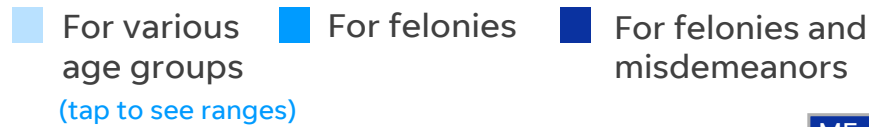
In the '80s, while serving as pastor of St. Casimir in Freeland, Pennsylvania, Skotek repeatedly raped a teenage girl over a five-year period, ultimately impregnating her at 16, then arranging for an abortion, according to the Pennsylvania grand jury report. The report contends that James Timlin, then the bishop of the Scranton Diocese, knew about Skotek's abuse but allowed Skotek to continue to serve in ministry for nearly two decades before he was removed in 2002 after another victim came forward alleging that she was also abused by Skotek while in high school. Skotek admitted to the abuse when confronted, according to the grand jury report.

In Oak Harbor, Washington, 90 miles north of Seattle, Barry Ashwell, 76, resides in a manufactured home in a retirement community. Ashwell served as a priest in the Seattle Archdiocese for more than 30 years and was put

on administrative leave in 2001, a few years after his former foster son alleged in a lawsuit that Ashwell had sexually abused him in the 1970s. That victim settled with the church in 1996. In 2005, three other men also accused Ashwell of abusing them in the '70s. The accusations, as well as [Ashwell's refusal to cooperate](#) with church investigators, were [documented extensively by Seattle media](#). His name was included on a 2016 list of credibly accused priests [released by the Seattle Archdiocese](#).

## States where clergy could still face charges for years-old sex offenses

Where the statutes of limitations have been eliminated to let residents bring child sexual abuse claims:



SOURCE CHILD USA

Now hobbled by dialysis, Ashwell said he had no opinion on statute of limitation reform, or if his neighbors should be aware of his past. "I'm done with this," he said.

Asked if he thought victims would have the same response – that they were "done with this" – Ashwell sneered, "I've had it with 'victims.'"

Asked if he was guilty of sexually abusing multiple children, Ashwell repeatedly said, "they couldn't prove anything."

### **'I will never get caught'**

Mary McHale, 47, lives in fear of running into her abuser on the street in Reading, Pennsylvania.

As a child, McHale was taught that the Catholic Church considered homosexuality a mortal sin. Terrified of going to hell for being gay, she turned to the confessional. She said that in 1989, her senior year of high school, her priest, the Rev. James Gaffney, told her, "We need to work on this together, we need to work on this outside of here."

Shortly after, McHale said Gaffney told her he had a "special program" for her. She said he led her to his bedroom at the church, closed the door and locked it. He pulled out a large envelope and explained the instructions. First, they had to point to each other's body parts, naming each by both its proper and slang terms. Then they would strip and critique each other's body.

McHale said Gaffney went first. She said he touched McHale's leg, commenting on how muscular she was. Terrified, she dressed quickly and left.

Tortured by secrecy, shame and guilt, McHale buried the truth, turning to alcohol to help her forget.

Then, in 2004, at 32, McHale saw another girl from her high school, Diane Vojtasek, had come forward with allegations against Gaffney.

In 2018, Gaffney was cited in the historic Pennsylvania report. McHale testified in front of the grand jury, naming Gaffney as her abuser. It was an affirming experience, she said. Vojtasek testified, too, telling the grand jury that Gaffney used to tell her, "I will never get caught."

"He should not be allowed a normal life. He took so many lives," said McHale, who spoke in October at a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, hearing on statute of limitation reform. "He ruined so many lives."

Gaffney, 62, now lives in a single-story brick house in northeast Reading.

Gaffney said he hasn't had any connections with the church for at least 15 years, that it does not provide him with a pension and, to his knowledge, doesn't track his whereabouts.

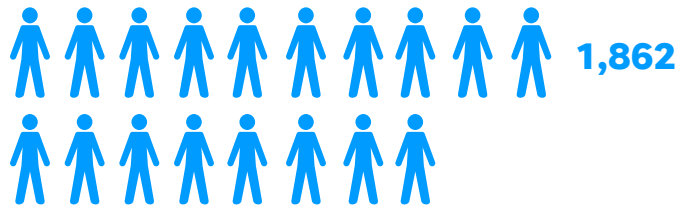
"They don't have a reason to," Gaffney said as he stood perched against the railing outside his front door. "They don't own me. I don't receive anything from them."

## Nearly 3,000 people now accuse Pennsylvania clergy of sexual abuse

As of August 2018



Since August 2018



SOURCE Pennsylvania Attorney General



Mary McHale in a sports portrait from 1989-90 when she was 17-18, the time of the priest abuse.

PAUL KUEHNEL, YORK DAILY RECORD

Asked if the abuse allegations against him were true or if he was wrongfully accused, he responded with a smile. "Both," he said. "It's amazing what lawyers will tell their clients to say."

"Here's the thing, I'm not interested in kids, OK? I'm not," he continued. "It was something that happened, an incident from a long time ago. It wasn't what people say it was."

Gaffney is protected by weak laws in Pennsylvania, McHale said, which she believes encourage offenders to intimidate their victims into silence.

"I will never get caught.' These are the words that I hear over and over again in my head," McHale said. "And so far in Pennsylvania, the monster's right."

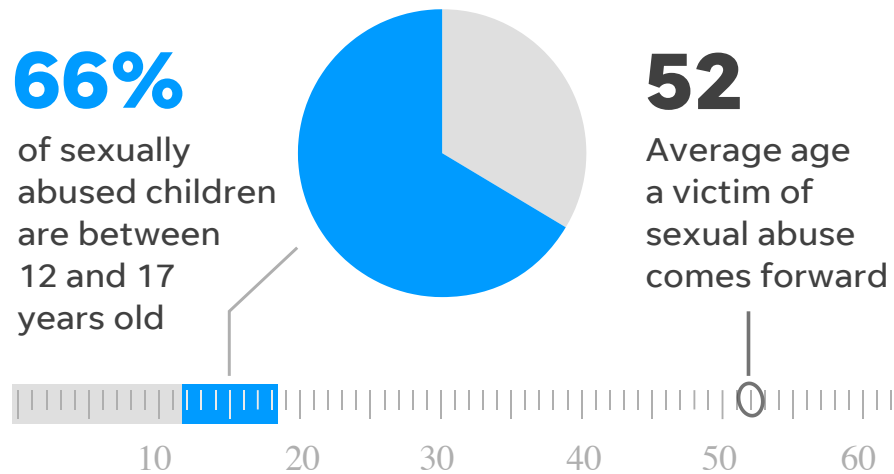
### Blending in at work

In early October, Roger Temme, 71, walked out of Building 5 of the Austin, Texas, complex where he lives dressed in white slacks and a short-sleeved blue shirt, his white beard trimmed short

Temme's name appeared on a list of credibly accused priests [released by the New Orleans Archdiocese](#) in November 2018. According to the list, his alleged abuse occurred in the "late 1970s," and the allegation was received in 1995. He had worked in the Ave Maria Retreat House in Lafitte, Louisiana, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in New Orleans.

But for the past 20 years he's been an active and well-liked figure in Austin, serving for nearly two decades as a volunteer recruiter and trainer for The Care Communities, a nonprofit that provided support for those affected by serious illnesses, including cancer and HIV. (Care Communities closed in 2017.)

In 2012, Temme was named one of the grand marshals of the Austin PRIDE celebrations, praised by event organizers as someone who had connected "hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS with loving teams of volunteers to help with practical and emotional support." He was a member of St. David's Episcopal Church and helped found and organize the first Multifaith Pride Service during Austin PRIDE Week in June 2001, according to the announcement.



SOURCE Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, CHILD USA

From January to November 2018, Temme also worked as a part-time volunteer coordinator for Interfaith Action of Central Texas, resigning shortly before his name surfaced on the New Orleans list.

When approached outside his home, Temme initially declined to comment, walking away before turning around and questioning why a reporter would be asking questions about the allegations against him.

“What happened 40 years ago is in the past,” he said. “The church has forgiven me and God has forgiven me.” He added, “I hope you feel good about your job.”

The Rev. James Vincent Flosi bounced around parishes in Illinois for almost two decades before resigning in 1992, claiming that his interests and responsibilities had changed. But documents released by the Chicago Archdiocese in 2014 revealed that the church had received multiple reports of Flosi abusing children and, at the end of 1991, recommended Flosi not be in the presence of minors without another adult present. After resigning, Flosi founded AIDSCare, a nonprofit that helps people with AIDS and HIV live independently.



Diana Vojtasek and Mary McHale sit behind Judy Deaven on stage during a grand jury presentation by Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro in Harrisburg on Aug. 14. Vojtasek and McHale are survivors of abuse by the same priest, James Gaffney.

JOHN BUFFONE, YDR

That many of these men continue to live openly in their communities, volunteering or taking other jobs where they'll be in close proximity to children, doesn't surprise Lanning, the retired FBI agent.

“When they rationalize, they're not trying to convince you – they're trying to convince themselves,” Lanning said.

“They're trying to talk themselves into the idea that they're a good person ... why would they stop doing something

like volunteering at a school? A lot of them don't think they did anything wrong.”

Elwood Bernas, who served in the Steubenville, Ohio, diocese, was suspended from ministry in 1986 according to church documents. In 2018, he was named in Steubenville's credibly accused list. Bernas, who goes by “Woody” and is now 64, worked until recently as the compliance specialist at [Newport Academy](#), a treatment center outside Seattle for teens who struggle with substance abuse.

A spokesman from the Steubenville diocese said that when credibly accused priests move to a different city, diocesan attorneys notify the new city's diocese – and that Steubenville did that with Bernas. But the Seattle Archdiocese said it had no record of being notified about Bernas.

## Former priests are moving into new job as nurses, teachers across U.S.

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Contacted by phone on Oct. 10, Bernas said he left the priesthood of his own accord in 1989 – disputing what the church said. He said he moved to Minnesota to become a licensed therapist and that he was included on the Steubenville Diocese list because in 1986, he picked up a 17-year-old male prostitute in West Virginia. After paying a fine, Bernas said he returned to the Steubenville Diocese, then to treatment for sex addiction, before ultimately leaving the priesthood. He said he never “crossed a boundary” with a parishioner, which the Steubenville Diocese confirmed. He has never been laicized.

A reporter contacted Newport Academy for comment on Oct. 10. A day later, a spokeswoman said upon learning of Bernas's past, Bernas was immediately fired.

“All background checks available to us did not surface this information,” said Kristen Hayes, a Newport Academy spokeswoman.

### ‘People need to know’

In other cases, victims fought for years to make information public – and they want it to stay that way.

In Santa Barbara, California, Robert Van Handel was a Franciscan monk who founded a local boys choir and worked as principal of St. Anthony's Seminary. But at the same time he was building up goodwill in the community, Van Handel was abusing numerous young boys for nearly 20 years, which he detailed in a [27-page sexual autobiography](#) that he authored for a therapist that was later published by The Los Angeles Times. In it, Van

Handel wrote, “there is something about me that is happier when accompanied by a small boy ... perhaps besides the sexual element, the child in me wants a playmate.”

Two of his victims were brothers Damian and Bob Eckert, who were molested multiple times from 1978 through 1982. Most of the abuse took place during choir trips to England, when parents weren't present. The brothers didn't know until years later that the other one had suffered, too.

In 2003, the Eckerts filed a civil suit against the Franciscans with a group of 23 other victims. Almost 10 years earlier, in 1994, Van Handel had pleaded guilty to one count of lewd and lascivious behavior with a 14-year-old choirboy and gone to prison. Ron Zonen, who prosecuted Van Handel, recalls identifying multiple victims, most of whom could not press charges because the statute of limitations had expired. Upon release in 1998, Van Handel was required to register as a sex offender.

Investigators contacted Damian Eckert during the 1994 trial. Tormented by his past, Damian Eckert had spent years struggling with booze, flying into fits of rage. He couldn't confront his abuser. He declined to participate.



Damian Eckert, right, and his brother Bob Eckert, left, pose for a portrait outside the Santa Barbara Mission in Santa Barbara, California.



ANNE CUSACK, LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

But when the sex abuse scandal exploded into public view in Boston in 2002, Bob Eckert felt it was time to do something. He prodded his brother to at least speak with an attorney, and go to counseling.

“Some of the other survivors, they were just terrified,” Bob Eckert, a former Marine, recalls. “They’re in tears, they kept saying, ‘I can’t go to trial, I can’t talk to the press.’ I felt like it was up to me. My training, it wired me as someone who wanted to stand up and fight the bully. I was willing to talk because I was pissed. But what really made it easier is that I was battling for my brother.”

In 2006, 25 plaintiffs, including the Eckerts, settled with the Franciscans. They received a monetary settlement and, after a long legal battle that went to the California Supreme Court, got the church to release thousands of documents that proved church superiors knew about Van Handel. It felt like a sliver of justice after years of sickening trauma.

That’s why the brothers were surprised to hear Van Handel, 72, now lives outside Portland, Oregon, where he’s no longer on the public sex offender registry.

A resident at Courtyard Fountains, a senior living center, Van Handel is in the advanced stages of Parkinson’s, according to his sister, Sandra Suran, who said Van Handel goes in and out of lucidity. She said shortly after Van Handel moved to Oregon in 2013, he received a letter from Oregon State Police that said Van Handel’s crimes did not rise to the level of a publicly registered sex offender in Oregon and that he would be removed from a public registry. (In Oregon only level 3 offenders, considered to be most likely to reoffend, are on the public registry.) She declined to share a copy of the letter with the USA TODAY Network, but the Oregon State Board of Parole and Post-prison Supervision confirmed Van Handel was classified as a Level 1 offender. Zonen, the prosecuting attorney for the 1994 criminal case, said Van Handel was classified by the state of California as likely to re-offend, which is why he was on the public registry there.

“

**This sets a precedent for other priests, who are younger or aren’t sick, and they can get involved with children again. It just makes me sick, totally pisses me off. It’s unbelievable. The whole reason I came forward was to make people aware.**

Bob Eckert

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The Eckerts were relieved to hear that because of his physical state, Van Handel likely can’t befriend families with young children and earn their trust. But they still think he should be on the public registry because “he did this, he admitted, it’s been proven – and I don’t want him to be able to build relationships with people” without them knowing about his past, Damian Eckert said.

“This sets a precedent for other priests, who are younger or aren’t sick, and they can get involved with children again,” Bob Eckert said. “It just makes me sick, totally pisses me off. It’s unbelievable.”

“The whole reason I came forward was to make people aware.”

The brothers are also adamant that statute of limitation laws across the country need to be reworked or dismissed altogether, offering survivors an opportunity for justice.

Darkness consumes victims for too long, Bob Eckert said. “Let’s get all this information out there. Let’s keep it in the light.”

*This story was written by Lindsay Schnell. It was reported by Schnell, Rachel Axon, Carley Bonk, Michael Braun, Matt Brannon, Chase Hunter B., Bree Burkitt, Brittany Carloni, Trish Choate, Max Cohen, Alia Dastagir, Marco Della Cava, Dan Horn, Shelby Fleig, Isaac Fornarola, Bethany Freudenthal, Alan Gomez, Grace Hauck, Nora Hertel, Rick Jervis, Marisa Kwiatkowski, Harrison Keegan, Matt Mencarini, Jorge Ortiz, Kelly Powers, Alexandria Rodriguez, Sam Ruland, Jeffrey Schweers, Nora Shelly, Noel Smith, Lamaur Stancil, Zach Tuggle, Tyler Vazquez, Jasmine Vaughn-Hall, Rose Velazquez, James Ward, Colin Warren-Hicks, Elizabeth Weise and Brad Zinn.*

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Search by your state's two-letter abbreviation and tap blue type to access your state's resources. Some states do not have resources specific to clergy abuse.

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