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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

POSITION PAPER

House Bill 568

"An Act making a special appropriation to the Department of Public Safety, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, for a public awareness program".

The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault supports House Bill 568 to appropriate funds for a public awareness program relating to the sexual abuse of minors. The Council and most of the Council funded programs have taken an active role in prevention/education, advocacy and/or treatment of child sexual assault.

Of the nineteen programs the Council funds, fourteen work with victims directly, conduct prevention/education programs in the schools and communities and/or are involved in child sexual assault coordination efforts. However, most of the programs do not have adequate resources to address the issue and there is no statewide effort to provide information to communities without sexual assault programs. Rural areas are of prime consideration in media efforts because there are so few resources in rural communities.

Child sexual assault reportings have drastically increased in the past few years. From FY 1980 to FY 1983 the reportings to the Division of Family and Youth Services in the Department of Health and Social Services has increased four times. Yet we know that this does not represent the actual number of incidences. Children must know that they have a right to be safe and protected. Adults need to know physical and behavioral symptoms of child sexual assault. Adults also need to know how to talk to a child who has disclosed sexual abuse and where to report it. These funds could assist the Council in providing information to the communities.


Robert J. Sundberg
Commissioner

INTENT OF LEGISLATION

HB 568 - "An Act making a special appropriation to the Department of Public Safety, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, for a public awareness program; and providing for an effective date."

The purpose of this legislation is to raise the public consciousness of the issue of sexual abuse of minors. We must teach adults and children alike to recognize the early warning signs of possible abuse. Children must be encouraged to speak out and share their concerns; adults must be taught to listen, believe, and offer assistance to these children. It is time for Alaskans to make a public statement that we will no longer stand by while our children are subjected to such a heinous crime.

ATTACHMENT A

SEX OFFENSES AGAINST JUVENILES¹
Number of Reported Incidents

| <u>Law Enforcement Agency</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1981</u> | <u>1982</u> |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Alaska State Troopers | 48 | 109 | 177 |
| Bethel Police Dept. | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Cordova Police Dept. | 4 | -- | 3 |
| Craig Police Dept. | -- | -- | -- |
| Dillingham Police Dept. | -- | 1 | 1 |
| Fairbanks Police Dept. | 25 | 13 | 18 |
| Homer Police Dept. | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Hoonah Police Dept. | -- | -- | -- |
| Juneau Police Dept. | 10 | 16 | 17 |
| Kenai Police Dept. | 3 | 5 | 11 |
| Ketchikan Police Dept. | 15 | 15 | 20 |
| Klawock Police Dept. | 1 | -- | -- |
| Kodiak Police Dept. | 8 | 2 | 13 |
| Kotzebue Police Dept. | -- | 1 | 6 |
| Nome Police Dept. | -- | 1 | 10 |
| North Pole Police Dept. | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| North Slope Borough Police Dept. | 9 | 4 | 2 |
| Palmer Police Dept. | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Petersburg Police Dept. | -- | 1 | 1 |
| Seldovia Police Dept. | -- | -- | 1 |
| Seward Police Dept. | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Sitka Police Dept. | -- | 12 | 17 |
| Skagway Police Dept. | 2 | -- | -- |
| Soldotna Police Dept. | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| Unalaska Police Dept. | -- | 1 | -- |
| Valdez Police Dept. | -- | 1 | -- |
| Whitter Police Dept. | -- | -- | -- |
| Wrangell Police Dept. | -- | -- | 1 |
| | | | |
| ALASKA SUBTOTAL (excluding Anchorage Police Dept.) | 142 | 201 | 293 |
| | | | |
| Anchorage Police Dept. (sexual assault ² vic- tims of all ages) | 117 | 173 | 158 |

¹Data provided by the Unified Crime Reports Section of the Alaska Department of Public Safety and the Anchorage Police Department.

²Forcible rape, assault with attempt to rape and statutory rape.

Prepared by House Research Agency, January 1984.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
 DIVISION OF FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES
 REPORTED PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE CASES
 FY 83

Definitions

1. Substantiated: Cases where there was sufficient evidence to support a child in need of aid determination and/or criminal action;
2. Unsubstantiated: Cases where the social worker believes that an incident occurred; however, the child was too young to have a provable case, there was insufficient evidence, or the child's safety was ensured;
3. Unconfirmed: Cases where there was insufficient evidence to determine the incident occurred.

Sexual Abuse

| <u>Region</u> | <u>Substantiated</u> | | <u>Unsubstantiated</u> | | <u>Unconfirmed</u> | | <u>Total</u> # |
|---------------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------------|-----|-------------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | |
| Southcentral | 146 | 60% | 56 | 23% | 41 | 17% | 243 |
| Northern | 42 | 34% | 57 | 47% | 23 | 19% | 122 |
| Northwestern | 7 | 46% | 4 | 27% | 4 | 27% | 15 |
| Southeastern | 63 | 72% | 19 | 20% | 7 | 8% | 94 |
| Western | 29 | 60% | 15 | 31% | 4 | 9% | 48 |
| Grand Total | 292 | 56%* | 151 | 29%* | 79 | 15% | 522 |

* Substantiated and unsubstantiated reports total 85%.

Physical Abuse

| <u>Region</u> | <u>Substantiated</u> | | <u>Unsubstantiated</u> | | <u>Unconfirmed</u> | | <u>Total</u> # |
|---------------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------------|-----|-------------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | |
| Southcentral | 149 | 55% | 89 | 33% | 33 | 12% | 271 |
| Northern | 35 | 25% | 83 | 61% | 21 | 14% | 145 |
| Northwestern | 5 | 42% | 7 | 58% | -0- | -0- | 12 |
| Southeastern | 63 | 50% | 34 | 27% | 29 | 23% | 126 |
| Western | 13 | 65% | 6 | 30% | 1 | 5% | 20 |
| Grand Total | 266 | 46%* | 224 | 39%* | 84 | 15% | 574 |

*Substantiated and unsubstantiated reports total 35%.

FRONTIERSMAN 1/12/84

Wake up about sexual abuse

During the past year, the Frontiersman has reported sexual abuse and assault cases involving children as young as 2 and as old as 15.

Sexual crimes against children are the most prevalent and serious of felony crimes in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

According to Alaska State Trooper statistics, 45 Valley children were the victims of reported sexual crimes in 1983.

Most sexual abuse remains unreported for months, years, sometimes forever.

National statistics indicate that one in four people will be sexually abused or assaulted in their lifetime.

Our children are being attacked by thieves who steal sexual gratification, who plunder innocence, who leave behind pain. Sometimes the thieves are the

children's own parents, sometimes a friend of the family or a relative.

The pain remains far longer than the actual memory. Different children handle it in different ways. Some may appear to be unaffected by an adult's intrusion of their

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bodies; 20 years later they may awaken to a screaming nightmare of childhood.

Other children may fear adults, or men, or women. Incest victims may engage in lengthy internal battles, vacillating between love and loathing, trying to separate affection from humiliation, anger from hate, forgiveness from martyrdom.

We are shocked when we hear of the violation of a child. We want to think of the perpetrators as "animals" or "psycho." We want to believe that the friend, neighbor, relative or member of the community who's convicted of sexual abuse or assault is some kind of aberrant human being. But there's only one thing that seems to commonly set "them" apart from "us."

Many of the perpetrators of sexual crimes against children were victims themselves. It's no excuse for their crime. But it indicates a pattern that must be broken now.

It's not enough that the Valley has one of the best teams in the state for dealing with sexual assaults.

We are educating ourselves and each other. We share the outrage and hurt when we learn of abused children. But why have we left the

potential victims in the dark?

We need a system for the early identification of sexual abuse. Now.

Children must know that sexual abuse is most often perpetrated by someone they know, not a stranger in a sedan offering candy.

An enlightened approach by the school district would help.

Children need to know what abuse is. They should be encouraged to report it, no matter who the perpetrator is. They deserve the right to have a safe place to go, a safe person to tell.

It has nothing to do with "sex education."

It has to do with the knowledge that could save them. Children have a right in our society to be educated. When that education could save them, the right becomes an imperative.

Deborah Heidecker

ALASKA NETWORK ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

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POSITION PAPER

HB 568: An Act making a special appropriation to the Department of Public Safety, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, for a public awareness program.

The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, representing 20 programs statewide that provide services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, supports HB568, which will provide funding to the Council to develop a public awareness program relating to the sexual abuse of minors.

Fifteen of the Network's 20 member programs are currently addressing the issue of child sexual assault by providing direct services to child victims and non-offending parents; conducting community education and awareness campaigns; developing and presenting curricula on child sexual assault prevention to students and educators in school settings; and coordination of efforts, including development and implementation of inter-agency protocols, in dealing with cases of child sexual assault. Programs have implemented these components in response to increased requests for services; however, funding to these programs to address this issue is not currently available on a statewide basis, nor are there sufficient resources or support services in many communities to address this issue.

The Network feels that there is a crucial need to educate the general public, with particular emphasis on rural areas where few services exist, regarding the high incidence of child sexual assault; the availability of agencies and other resources to deal with child sexual assault; the laws requiring reporting of child sexual assault by educators, medical personnel, and other professionals; and appropriate responses to a child who has disclosed sexual assault.

A coordinated statewide effort (either by use of Public Service Announcements, production of an Alaska-specific film, a statewide conference, or other educational program) providing such information on child sexual assault will serve to heighten the awareness of the general public and promote concerted efforts to effectively respond to this most serious problem.