

Introduction

On June 6, 2012, when the decades-long history of sexual abuse of students at the Horace Mann School was revealed in a *New York Times Magazine* cover story, the response both inside and outside the school community was unalloyed shock. Questions swirled as new allegations of abuse emerged in the weeks and months after publication. As the number of alleged abusers rose to the double digits it became clear that what had happened at Horace Mann was orders of magnitude beyond the abhorrent occurrence of an individual teacher imposing sexual activity on a student.

What happened at Horace Mann represents the largest concentration of abusers at a single institution. Such things do not happen by chance, and the situation at Horace Mann was enabled by a culture of arrogance and secrecy, aided by individual acts of cowardice and denial by administrators, board members, and teachers. Thus enabled, abuse was allowed to thrive for decades. This institutional dynamic -- the tacit collusion of abuser and administrator to keep things under wraps -- must be understood, and eliminated, in order to keep our children safe. There is no safety in secrecy, whether it is at the behest of an administrator, a board member or an abuser. Secrecy aids abusers, harms victims and creates more victims, each one preventable.

Although the rampant sexual abuse at the Horace Mann school has almost certainly ended, the culture of secrecy that abetted and sustained it continues. The fact that the only investigation of this painful episode was conducted over the objections of the school, rather than at its request, indicates that the administration continues to place a higher value on protecting itself than its students. Perhaps the most disappointing part of this history is that a premier educational institution has not made a single contribution to the project of understanding how things went so wrong for so long. Literally everything we now know about sexual abuse at Horace Mann has come from individuals and organizations outside of the school. Were it up to the current administration, the story would never have emerged. This fact alone should give parents pause.

This report reconstructs the story of how Horace Mann's administration allowed sexual abuse to continue for decades (despite many reports and complaints), and reacted to the revelations once they became public. Our goal is twofold: first, to provide the Horace Mann community with a greater understanding of what happened. Second, and far more important, to serve as a case study from which all schools can learn. No Horace Mann administrator or trustee came into the job as a committed malefactor, or believed him or herself to be one at any point. They all intended to foster an environment where students thrive. The fact that those good intentions had such disastrous results attests to the subtlety and insidiousness of the organizational practices this report addresses. It is only by embracing robust, transparent,

publicly-accountable procedures that we can be sure our children are safe. Transparency requires courage on the part of those whose innate reflex is to hide their actions from public view.

This report is the work of numerous experts, volunteers and contributors over the course of nearly three years. The report narrative, written by Harvard University case writer Laura Winig, reconstructs a verifiable record of how the Horace Mann administration reacted to sex abuse allegations over the course of many years. The Findings and Recommendations section, authored by Leslie Crocker Snyder, a retired judge with expertise in prosecuting sex crimes, contains her recommendations for policies and practices that could be adopted at any school. The Best Practices section, based on research by Professor Charol Shakeshaft, an educational researcher noted for her studies on sexual abuse of students by school staff, distills policies to maximize student safety. Another section contains information about the incidence of student sexual abuse at other schools, collected and organized under the direction of Professor Marci Hamilton, a constitutional scholar and advocate for reforming statutes of limitation. Professors Hamilton and Shakeshaft are leading authorities in the field of sex abuse prevention research, training and advocacy. We are grateful for their interest in this case and the dedication and expertise they brought to their work.

It is the hope of everyone associated with this effort and every member of the Horace Mann community, past and present, that this report will encourage others to examine and improve their own schools. Now. Before more lives are ruined and lost. We have no interest in accusations against anyone, living or dead, or even in justice or recompense for the victims, except insofar as they, too, deserve a complete accounting. Accusation, justice and recompense are matters for the courts. If this report helps prevent a single student from being harmed, we will have succeeded, and something positive will have come from this tragedy.