

CCWRC Response to Sandusky Verdict

As victim advocates, we are pleased that today, with the conviction of Jerry Sandusky, the criminal justice system worked to hold a perpetrator of child sexual abuse accountable. We have the utmost respect and admiration for the victims of child sexual abuse who showed tremendous courage and grace in every aspect of this investigation and trial. While nothing can undo the damage that was caused or restore what was taken from them, we hope that with community support they can find healing and hope. We appreciate the thoughtful and thorough deliberations on the part of the jury and particularly their understanding that delays in coming forward or difficulty in disclosing their childhood trauma is a natural outcome of such trauma and does not diminish in any way the survivors' credibility.

Child sexual abuse is an epidemic in our society and we can no longer ignore its reality - the well-being of our children depends on our recognition of child sexual abuse, our action to prevent it, and our appropriate and swift response when it does occur. This verdict sends a clear message to those who would hurt our children - we will protect our children, we will hold you accountable if you do them harm, and our community will no longer allow these crimes to be perpetrated against our most vulnerable citizens.

This verdict also sends a clear message to those victims of child sexual abuse who were able to come forward - we believe you, we are sorry for what happened to you, we will do our best to never let it happen again, we will support your healing, and we are proud of your courage in coming forward and speaking the truth. For those victims who are not yet able to come forward, we hope that this verdict facilitates their healing so they will know they are not alone and do not have to suffer in silence.

Finally, we hope the tragedy of these past years for the victims and of the past months as our community became aware of these crimes will galvanize us all to take steps to protect our children and empower adult survivors in the future. Child sexual assault is preventable, but it takes education, understanding and the will to act on the part of a community. Let us pledge to make it so in Centre County.