

**CHILD VICTIMS TO ADULT SURVIVORS  
OF ABUSE & BULLYING: LESSONS LEARNED &  
RESOURCES DEVELOPED  
ACE- DHH CONFERENCE  
SANTA FE NM  
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&

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# Reality...

- ⊙ Children with disabilities...
  - One in four will experience neglect and/or abuse.
  - One in two will experience bullying.
- ⊙ The experience of maltreatment significantly impacts the children's health, learning, behavior and future.
- ⊙ How can we continue to ignore this reality experienced by so MANY of our students?

# Basic Understandings: {Abuse, bullying and maltreatment}

- linguistically has no ASL equivalent, so we have asked the interpreters to spell a-b-u-s-e to express the full English concept



# Schools for the Deaf

○ Maine

○ Hawaii

○ Maryland

○ Wisconsin

○ Louisiana

○ Kentucky

○ Colorado

○ St. Rita School for the Deaf, Cincinnati

○ Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf

○ Central North Carolina School for the Deaf

○ Jericho Hill School for the Deaf/British Columbia, Quebec & Montreal

○ Ireland

○ Korea

For decades, officials at the 115-year-old Washington School for the Deaf have ignored or discounted a persistent pattern of sexual abuse.

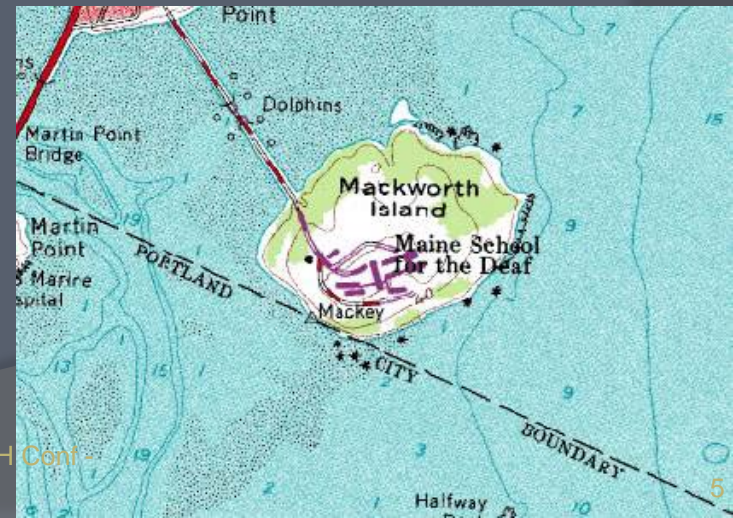
At least half the nation's 500 taxpayer-funded schools have been embroiled in controversies about sexual and physical abuse over the last two decades, an investigation by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer found. In state after state, abuse remains a silent threat in schools.

# The Maine Experience

- 1875 first school for the Deaf in Maine
- 1955 renamed Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, and moved to a literal island
- Residential school serving state-wide
- 200 students in 1982, infants – 12 grade



M. Troop & H. Johnson - 2013 ACE DHH Conf -  
Santa Fe NM



# Abuse rampant

- Students hoped abuse would not transfer to new school in 1955
- Principal, Dean of Students, Teachers, janitors, dorm parents; older students passed along learned behavior
- Students wrote letter to Legislature, who sent it to DOE, who sent it to the Superintendent, who called an assembly and ripped up the letter in front of the students

# Maine 1982

- Story published in a disability newsletter
- Attorney General and DOE investigated
- No abuse within the statute of limitations was discovered
- 3 top staff given opportunity to resign – still drew retirement pay, no legal consequences
- No help offered to victims or families

# Maine 1995

- Trauma focus in Department of Mental Health lead to survey of Deaf Community
- Signing mental health therapists
- 5 men in support group broke the silence
- Asked Maine Legislature for permission to sue the state
- Legislature set up Baxter Compensation Authority for a non-litigious solution



# Comments from Maine Teachers

- If teachers abused the students, it must be because they weren't paid enough.
- I never saw anything, so there must not have been abuse.
- Well, come to think of it, the Principal pulled one student out of class quite often. I was upset because he was missing math.

# Maine: Final Tally

- 1962-82 = 1,100 student population
- 361 Claimants applied (33%)
- 340 claims deemed eligible (94%)
  
- Compensation paid out: \$17,500,000
- No-out-of-pocket expense mental health services for any former student: \$5,000,000 and counting

# The Path to RECOVERY

TELL MY STORY  
Again, Again

You are NOT Alone!

FAMILY

2007-2009 for a special occasion  
I'm happy to see you here  
I'm glad you're here  
I'm glad you're here  
I'm glad you're here

Out to the community  
Out to the community  
Out to the community  
Out to the community

Handwritten notes and drawings at the top of the page.

# Here's what HELPS US HEAL:

In future hope to get strength better  
XOXO

Communication brings healing!

TEAMWORK

+

iMOM

Handwritten notes and drawings on the right side.

CARON STREET House  
SARAH WELMOUTH  
Loralei McGinn  
I love you  
We will remember the  
Dana T. Lopez  
October 10, 2003

Handwritten notes and drawings on the right side.

SMILE ANYONE PLEASE Positive

BE EASY, SOFT and gentle To each other.

SEEK HELP COUNSELING  
SPIRITUALITY COUNSELING  
SUPPORT GROUPS  
FRIENDS & FAMILY

GET RID OF EVIL - LET THE GOOD COME IN.



# Safer Place Quilt

with healing messages to & from the community



# Maine's Deaf Community Now

- ◉ Spike in divorces
- ◉ 2 Deaf perpetrators in jail
- ◉ Overall, healthier
- ◉ Moved from Victim to Survivor



# HI School for the Deaf & Blind

- 1914 in Honolulu; Island of O`ahu
  - Serves deaf children from all islands in HI
  - Families' 1° languages, cultures very diverse
    - (Ilokano, Chuukese, Tagalog, Kosraen, Pohnpeian, Marshallese, Chinese, Hawai`ian, Spanish)
    - ~half of families interviewed were not primary English
    - ~half lived on the “neighbor” islands
- Many travel from great distances
- 68 students; 15 residential
- Pro-ASL environment



# Investigation Context

- Student-student abuse hit media 2011
- “Class-action” lawsuit initiated vs. state of HI
- ~12 lawyers/clients involved by 2012
- Judge appointed to oversee litigation
- Parties agree to first assess student needs
  - Unusual “reverse” order (before “discovery”)
- Hired Independent Mental Health Examiner team



# “Public Health” Crisis Approach

- Number of abused students unknown, likely to continue emerging in months, years ahead
- Evaluating a “sample” only
- Analogous to public health crisis
- Data from “sample” leads to conclusions about the entire “population at risk”



# Institutional Evaluation Methods

- All based on “Maine” experience/model
- “Bottom-up” investigation through D.O.E. level
- 40 key personnel interviews
- Campus observations, inspections, photos
- Security, safety, etc., policy/procedure reviews
- Abuse prevention, sex ed., etc., curricula reviews
- HSDB website review

# Community Evaluation Methods

- Numerous interviews of key personnel representing various agencies and programs
  - Deaf organizations, programs
  - Sexual abuse/prevention organizations, programs
  - Mental health organizations, programs
  - A.P.I. organizations, programs (esp. re: “healing”)

# Report

- 153 recommendations
  - “immediately and directly related to student safety, healing, or prevention of sexual abuse”
  - “meaningful but less directly related to...”
- Report remains embargoed
- Judge following “staged distribution” plan to foster collaborative decision-making
- Litigants pleased that report focuses on “how to fix things – not pointing fingers”



# Comments from Hawaii Teachers

- The workshop on reporting requirements was out of time. I still don't know what I'm supposed to do.

Once the student was told he had a right to say "no," the abuse from the other students stopped.

- I heard it third hand.

# Comments from Hawaii Teachers

- It doesn't matter that we had that bad story in the newspaper. I'm still proud of HSDB, our school, our 100 year history and I support it 100%.



**HSDB**  
Hawaii School for the Deaf & the Blind

# Parallel Universes

- Mental Health and Deafness Field
- Teachers who Teach the Teachers of the Deaf (AGBell? & CAID?)
- Hands and Voices: “O.U.R. Children Project”
- CEC/Division of Communication Disabilities and Deafness (DCDD)
- Association of College Educators – Deaf & Hard of Hearing?

# The story of how four Deaf men brought the Church to justice

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# Prevention is the key...

## 1. Awareness:

- Share this PP with your students.
  - I (Harold Johnson) would be honored to co-present with you via a video call.

## 2. Understanding:

- Require your students to read
  - “Protecting the Most Vulnerable From Abuse”
  - “The Risk & Prevention of Maltreatment of Children w/ Disabilities”



### 3. Action:

- Join the Hands & Voices “O.U.R. Children Project” “that uses IFSP & IEP documents and attachments to build safety and self advocacy into children’s educational programming.

### 4. Involvement:

- Identify “Bright Spots” who can share what they know and help us learn what we need to insure the safety and success of our students.

# Silence is NOT an option!

- What are your questions, comments, and suggestions?
- Will you join us in this effort to insure the safety and success of our students?
- What will you do in your program to insure your students are prepared to prevent, recognize, report and respond to the maltreatment of their children?

# Contact Information

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