

# WHY ISN'T THIS BIG NEWS?

On June 16, the *New York Times* ran an Associated Press story, "Data Shed Light on Child Sexual Abuse by Protestant Clergy." It said, "the three companies that insure a majority of Protestant churches say they typically receive upward of 260 reports a year of children younger than 18 being sexually abused by members of the clergy, church staff members, volunteers or congregants."

On June 20, the *Times* ran an article called "Between Teacher and Student: the Suspicions are Growing." It said "although federal statistics show that reported sex crimes aimed at young people in general—whether at the hands of middle school teachers, parish priests or relatives—have fallen nationwide since the early 1990s, New York State has reported a marked increase in a broader but similar category, what are called moral-fitness cases, involving certified teachers and administrators."

It is interesting that these two stories have not been more extensively covered by other major news organizations. In a time when Catholic priests are routinely ridiculed and stereotyped as molesters, the study on Protestant ministers shows the problem is far from limited to one religion. And as we have pointed out for years, the problem of kids being molested at school is often overlooked.

One troubling aspect of the June 20 story is that there isn't much information on how students are being treated in schools across the nation. According to the *Times*: "the dearth of national data on reports of student abuse at the hands of educators is the result of its wide-ranging nature: a spectrum of misdeeds, from lewd remarks to actual sex, and a range of overlapping responses. There are school disciplinary proceedings, state hearings to revoke certification and criminal prosecution. And many cases simply quietly

disappear.”

These stories need to be discussed. We have to make sure that children are protected wherever they are—whether in Catholic churches, any house of worship, or in the schoolroom.