

SNAP

Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

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For immediate release
April 24, 1997

VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY CLERGY FORMING NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER OF SNAP

--Self-help group provides support and information to victims of abuse--

Area survivors of sexual abuse by clergy are forming a New England chapter of the Chicago-based SNAP -- *Survivor's Network of those Abused by Priests*. Regional coordinator of the New England chapter will be Phil Saviano, a native of the Worcester Diocese, now living in Boston. The first, organizational meeting will be held on Saturday, May 10, beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Room of the Public Library in Needham, Massachusetts.

"Recent news reports about a Fr. John Geoghan, who is accused of sexually abusing 38 children in various Greater Boston parishes over 32 years, and the many accusations of abuse by clergy in the Worcester Diocese, attest to the need for an organization such as SNAP," said Mr. Saviano. "For victims and their families, SNAP can be a route to both emotional healing and empowerment."

Over 3,000 men and women who were molested by Catholic clergy belong to regional chapters of SNAP nationwide. The purpose of the grass roots organization is to provide self-help support to survivors, to share resources and information, and to organize for political action to challenge the Church to deal more effectively with the problem of abusive priests.

The formation of the New England Chapter of SNAP also comes in the wake of

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legislation recently filed by Massachusetts Senator Mark Montigny of the Second Bristol District. His bill, *An Act Relative to the Protection of Children* (Senate 1707) would require clergy members who become aware of abuse to report it to civil authorities, under penalty of fines of up to \$5,000. Montigny's legislation would further hold the institution which employs the clergy member liable for fines of up to \$50,000 if it is found to be negligent in failing to report the abuse to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. Similar legislation was also recently filed by Senator James Jajuga. Members of the Health and Human Services Committee are expected to hear testimony from sexual abuse victims when a hearing on Montigny's bill is held in Boston on May 29.

Mr. Saviano's involvement with the issue stems from his childhood abuse by Fr. David A. Holley at St. Denis Parish in East Douglas, MA. Holley had served in several parishes in the Diocese of Worcester between 1962 and 1969. His story generated both local and national headlines in recent years as Saviano pursued accountability for the priest's actions in a civil suit against Holley and the Diocese. Mr. Saviano settled his suit in 1996, after refusing to agree to gag order provisions. Holley is now serving a record 275-year prison term in New Mexico, for the abuse of eight boys there in the 1970's.

For more details about the May 10 meeting, victims and parents are encouraged to call SNAP at 617/983-5075. The Needham Public Library is located at 1139 Highland Avenue in Needham. From Route 128, take Exit 19B and head west on Highland Avenue. Entrance to the Community Room is on Rosemary Street, adjacent to the parking lot.

For more information about the New England Chapter, call the above number, or write to: SNAP, c/o Phil Saviano, 37 Oakview Terrace, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. The national office of SNAP can be reached by calling 312/483-1059, or by writing to SNAP, 8025 Honore, Chicago, IL 60602.