



"A Message from the Inspector General: Federal Bureau of Investigation's Handling of Tips of Hands-on Sex Offenses Against Children," August 2024

Hello, I'm Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today, my office released a report on the FBI's handling of tips that it receives alleging hands-on sex offenses against children, or offenses that include physical sexual contact. We completed this review as a follow up on issues identified in our July 2021 report on the FBI's handling of allegations against Larry Nassar.

Today's report found that since the time it received the allegations against Nassar, the FBI has implemented training, policy updates, and system changes to improve its handling of allegations of crimes against children. However, we identified numerous instances where the FBI didn't appropriately respond to such allegations.

For example, of the 327 case files we reviewed, we flagged 42 incidents for further FBI review because we believed they required immediate attention. Concerns that led us to flag incidents included:

- a lack of recent investigative activity,
- lack of logical investigative steps,
- not reporting suspected child abuse to appropriate state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies,
- leads that weren't appropriately covered, and
- instances of substantial non-compliance with FBI policies.

In one example, the FBI received an allegation involving hands-on abuse by a registered sex offender and opened an investigation. However, the FBI didn't take appropriate investigative action for over a year, and it didn't refer the suspected child abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency with jurisdiction. During this period, the subject allegedly victimized at least one additional minor for a period of approximately 15 months. After we raised this incident to the FBI's attention, the FBI took appropriate action, and the subject was indicted on federal charges.

We also found substantial non-compliance with mandatory reporting requirements. In 47 percent of incidents we reviewed, we found no evidence that FBI employees complied with mandatory reporting requirements to state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies and, in 50 percent of incidents, no evidence of reporting to social service agencies.

Additionally, we found that FBI employees didn't always comply with FBI policies put in place to protect victims. For example, in the incidents we reviewed, we found 40 percent of the active child sexual abuse allegations did not include evidence that the FBI responded within 24 hours. In addition, for over one third of the victims we identified, we found no evidence that they received victim services or case updates.

It's critically important that the FBI appropriately handle all allegations of hands-on sex offenses against children. Because failure to do so can result in children continuing to be abused and perpetrators abusing more children.

To read our report, all of our findings, and our 11 recommendations, please visit our website oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov.

Thank you for joining me today.

(Stock media provided by composer William Pearson and publisher Prolific Two Publishing/Pond5.com, www.pond5.com.)