

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

August 10, 2010 at 5:28pm

SNAP to LCWR: model compassion for sex abuse victims

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NCR Today



Standing in a 105 degree temperature outside the

Hyatt Regency hotel in downtown Dallas, four members of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) held a press conference as heads of women religious communities were checking in inside the hotel lobby at the outset of the annual gathering for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

The SNAP assembly included Steve Theisen, Therese Albrecht, David Clohessy and Lisa Kendzior.

Clohessy said that they were holding the press conference for two reasons. The first was to ask anyone who had ever been abused by women religious to come forward for healing. "Sex abuse by nuns has been far more widespread than anybody realizes," Clohessy, SNAP director, said. He said that in coming forward and sharing the pain, healing can finally take place. The second reason for the conference, he said, was to send a message to the women religious leadership that it should do more to "come clean?"

about abusive nuns. He called for LCWR to develop a national abuse policy that could be a model for the bishops and for the entire world. Sadly, he said, efforts to work with LCWR have been rebuffed for the past six years.

During these past six years, Clohessy said, SNAP has repeatedly asked to address LCWR at its annual national gathering, a request that has been denied. He said SNAP has also asked LCWR to allow a SNAP link on the LCWR website and to give SNAP the names of regional women religious sex abuse victim coordinators, requests that have also been denied, he said.

He said the LCWR leadership has told him that it is more proper for abuse victims to work with individual orders, claiming that LCWR is not the venue to deal with women religious sex abuse issues.

SNAP calls itself a confidential, independent, self-help group of men and women who have been molested by church officials (priests, ministers, brothers and nuns). "When abuse victims stay quiet, molesters go undetected and children and vulnerable adults are at risk," a paper SNAP distributed read. It urged victims to contact SNAP.

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