

A Model for Responding to Sexual Abuse within Institutions

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This document represents the perspectives, views, and professional recommendations of a collective group of individuals, including victims/survivors and survivor advocates from the State of Maine. The call to volunteer our time and energy resulted in a yearlong study of the complex issues related to child and adult victims/survivors of Institutional sexual abuse in the State of Maine.

We offer this document as a launching pad for continued work and ask all who read it to do so with an open mind and a caring heart. There is much more to be done to expedite the relief of suffering and for the healing to continue.

The team offers its' gratitude to Community Counseling Center of Portland, Maine for its partnership in the development of this document. Additionally, the staff time, administrative support, space, and refreshments for many of our meetings contributed greatly to our success. We also extend our thanks to Lucky Hollander, VP of Advocacy & Prevention Services at Youth Alternatives, for her consultation.

This document was created by the *Best Practice Team* and is intended to be a helpful tool for Institutions and others. If you reproduce or refer to this document in whole or in part we expect you to identify the document and credit the authors.

If you wish to contact any of the authors of this document, please call the administrative office of Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM) at 207-828-1035 (this number is not for hotline calls—for the sexual assault hotline please call 1-800-313-9900). The current director of the center is Cyndi Amato.

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Dear Victims/Survivors, Family Members, Institution Personnel,
and Concerned Citizens,

A Model for Responding to Sexual Abuse within Institutions has been developed by a caring and committed group of experienced professionals who have the deepest respect and regard, not only for the many victims/survivors and their families, but also for all the Institutions that are struggling to find a meaningful response to sexual abuse disclosures. We see these Institutions – religious organizations, scouts, schools, childcare facilities, and camps – as cornerstones of our society, places where families can entrust their children to others for guidance, instruction, and/or care. So while our interest clearly is grounded in meeting the needs of victims/survivors, we also care deeply about meeting the needs of Institutions. Just as society needs strong, empowered victims/survivors and families, so it needs strong, empowered, trustworthy Institutions.

In the past, society all too often turned a blind eye to many forms of abuse. Fear, secrecy, and silence were common responses to child sexual abuse. Within the silence grew a great uncertainty – a void of information – about how best to respond to sexual abuse disclosures. And, within this void, many Institutions responded to reports of child sexual abuse as many families had: trying to handle it internally rather than involving external authorities. These efforts have ultimately frustrated and hurt victims/survivors and their families as well as the Institutions themselves.

It is time to break the silence and begin a new way of responding to allegations of sexual abuse within Institutions so that children are safe, families feel secure, and Institutions retain their credibility. Society cannot afford to lose the valuable resource of its strong Institutions.

We recognize that each story and each journey is unique and that the road traveled will vary widely from person to person, from Institution to Institution. We recognize the trauma sexual abuse causes and the courageous efforts of victims/survivors and their families to educate all of us. We also recognize the courageous efforts of those Institutions that are rising to meet the many challenges they face: self-examination, protocol development, prevention, and renewed efforts to repair harm resulting from any past inappropriate and/or deficient responses to sexual abuse disclosures by children and adults. For Institutions to survive and thrive and for children and families to grow, there must be the sense that Institutions are safe, protective, and responsive to child and adult reports of maltreatment.

This model is in no way intended to answer all questions, but it will provide Institutions, as well as victims/survivors and others, with some of the support and information needed to respond to sexual abuse in these settings and to navigate through the maze of information and resources available. It is our hope that this model will lead everyone involved on an easier path to healing, recovery, and restoration of the strength of the Institution.

Respectfully,

The Best Practice Team

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

This **Overview of Contents** outlines each section of the packet. Following this overview, you will find an **Introduction**, which is an explanation of how the *Best Practice Team* developed and how our process unfolded. Next, there are two simple **Visual Overviews** of *A Model for Responding to Institutional Sexual Abuse*—one for victims/survivors and family members and another for Institutions.

The **Guidelines for the Institution** address issues of both response and prevention. It is the obligation of those in authority to take full responsibility for responding compassionately to those sexually abused under their auspices and to do so with a focus on healing for all: victims/survivors, family members, communities, and the Institution itself. It is also the Institution's responsibility to protect the children currently in their care from the possibility of further abuse. There are legal implications in such matters for those who have been victimized and for the Institution itself. The guidelines in this section address these issues and provide a framework for responding.

The **Guidelines for the Victim/Survivor and Family** outline treatment options and recommend that victims/survivors go to a neutral party for information, support, and help with the reporting of the abuse as well as guidance in finding treatment. Also in this section you will find guidelines for interviewing a therapist for treatment. This section should help victims/survivors and family members find a therapist who is right for them.

The **Reporting of Institutional Sexual Abuse** section provides some basic information about actual reporting guidelines. Following this you will find the **Reporting Guidelines for Employees of Institutions**, which specifically address these issues.

Additionally, you will find information regarding the **Treatment of Child Sexual Abusers Who Have Molested Children in an Institutional Setting**. This section outlines what is considered effective treatment for sexual abusers and addresses topics surrounding restitution and a process called clarification to victims/survivors, their families, the community, and the Institution.

Finally, the packet includes two sections of **Resources** that may be helpful to Institutions and victims/survivors and their families. The packet ends with the **Bibliography**, which includes many of the resources that influenced the development of this model.

INTRODUCTION

In January 2002, the magnitude of clergy sexual abuse within the Catholic Church prompted church officials in Maine to develop a means of responding to sexual abuse victims/survivors and to educate those within the Institution about sexual abuse. This response included the development of an office within the Portland Diocese called “Healing and Assistance Ministry” and an educational program called “Protecting God’s Children.” In addition, organizations outside the church developed separate responses. The Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP) organized multiple “listening sessions” for victims/survivors to speak directly to church officials about their abuse. Agencies such as the Sexual Assault Response Centers and other programs and individuals who treat trauma offered various avenues of support. Additionally, a grassroots group of lay Catholics, called Voice of the Faithful, established a chapter in Maine with three primary goals: to support those who have been abused, to support priests of integrity, and to shape structural change within the Church.

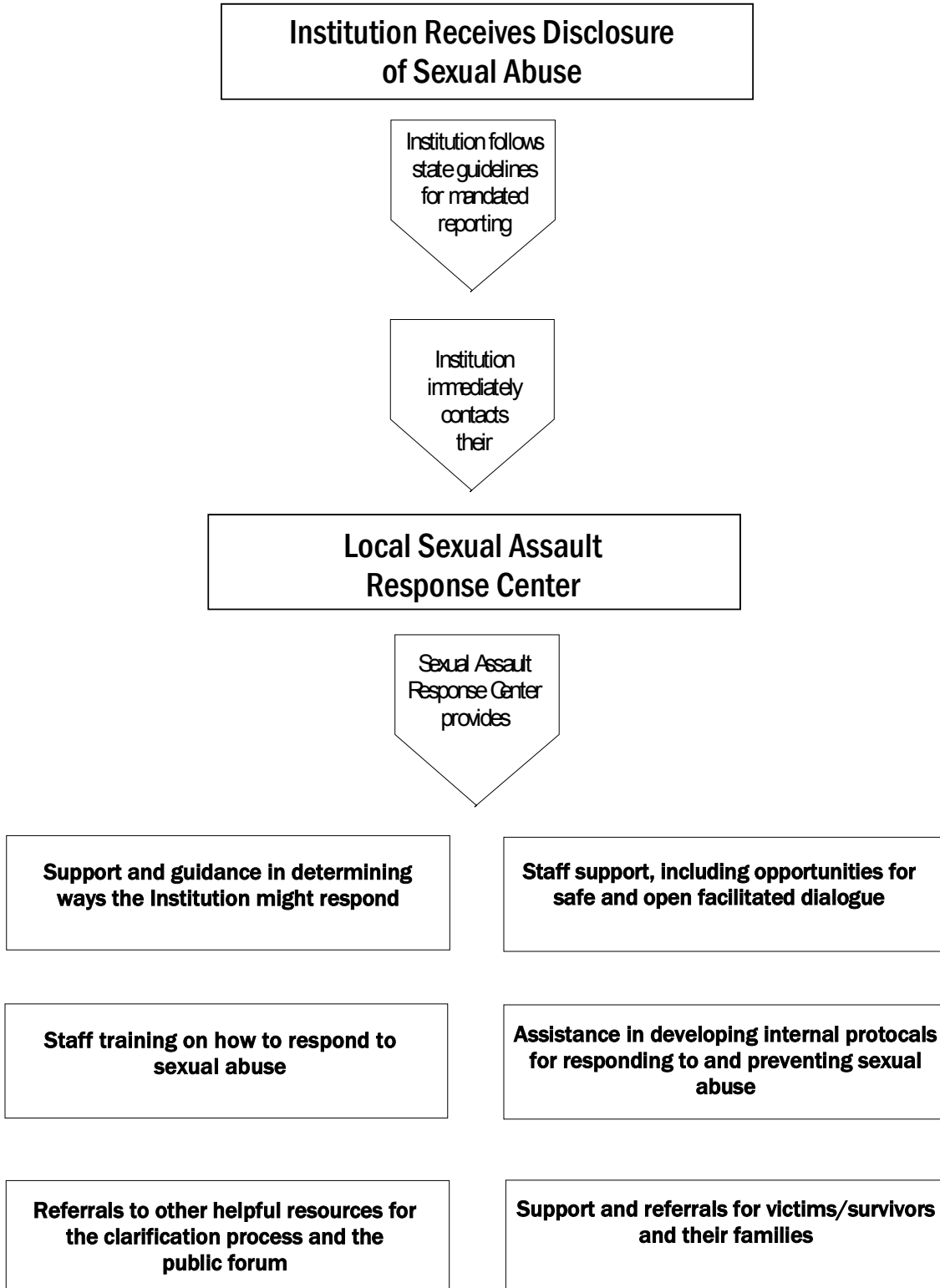
While these responses were good first steps, gaps in the system continued to emerge and concerns were expressed. The Maine Chapter of Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) approached various professionals, agencies, individuals, victims/survivors, and family members with experience and understanding of sexual abuse. They requested that these individuals assemble to develop a model for responding to allegations within the church system in Maine and that this model be based on current best practices in the fields of sexual abuse, social work, and advocacy. By February 2003, this independent volunteer group was formed and began meeting on a monthly basis in Portland, Maine. We called ourselves the *Best Practice Team*. While the idea for this group came from some members of VOTF, the *Best Practice Team* is an independent entity and the response model we developed is an independently created document.

As we started to explore how we might begin to develop a response model, our discussions inevitably led to the magnitude of this task and to the reality that child sexual abuse had occurred in several Institutions and organizations in Maine in addition to the Roman Catholic Church. We discussed how sexual abuse allegations had been responded to at Baxter School for the Deaf, in Boy Scouts of America, in public and private schools, and in churches of other religious denominations. We came to realize that we had the opportunity and the responsibility as professionals and advocates to recommend not only how the Roman Catholic Church should respond to sexual abuse within that Institution, but also how other Institutions should respond as well. We began calling such abuse *Institutional Sexual Abuse*. We believed that by expanding our vision of the task at hand, we could have a greater impact on children’s lives. Our goal was to develop a response model that would provide guidelines for individuals, families and Institutions affected by sexual abuse. In the end, the combined perspectives and years of experience as professionals, therapists, victims/survivors, family members, religious educators, and advocates contributed to the creation of this model. Much of what is presented here comes from the expertise of many who have worked with families where sexual abuse has occurred.

It is important to remember that in many ways these Institutions are often extensions of the family: the scouting organization is where the family sends their children for developing many skills, the school is where the family sends their children for education, and the church is where families send their children for religious direction. The betrayal dynamics are similar when abuse occurs in *any* trusted relationship.

Responding to sexual abuse is an extremely complicated task. Therefore, we do not expect that all bases have been covered nor all concerns addressed. It is our hope that at a minimum this response model and information packet may offer direction and consistency in the community's efforts to prevent the abuse of children in Institutions and to support those children and adults who have been abused.

VISUAL OVERVIEW OF MODEL
FOR
INSTITUTIONS



VISUAL OVERVIEW OF MODEL
FOR
VICTIMS/SURVIVORS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

**Victim/Survivor Initially Reports Abuse
to someone they trust**

This person follows
state guidelines for
mandated reporting
and then refers
the victim/survivor
or family member
to

**The Local Sexual Assault Response
Center Hotline**

Sexual Assault
Response Center
provides ongoing
use of the hotline,
an information
packet about
sexual abuse and
treatment, and
an advocate for
the victim/survivor.
The advocate
helps evaluate
options and
connects
victim/survivor
to

**Appropriate Community Based
Treatment Options**

Individual, Family,
and Group Counseling

Alternative Therapies Including
Experiential and Bodywork

Psychiatric and Medication
Support

Self Help Groups

Legal Counsel

GUIDELINES FOR THE INSTITUTION

Respond with Compassion and Take Full Responsibility

An Institution's image in the community is very important. No church or school or other type of Institution wants to be thought of as a place where children get hurt. For this reason, it may be tempting for an Institution to minimize, deny, or in many other ways take a defensive approach when faced with charges of child sexual abuse.

When administrators of an Institution learn that one of their staff has been accused of child sexual abuse, they should consider two main questions before responding: (1) what kind of response will ensure that children are safe in their care; and, (2) what is the best way to respond that immediately supports the victim/survivor, the Institution itself, and the community as a whole? The answer to both questions is the same: the Institution must respond directly to the disclosure(s) with openness, care, and compassion. Unfortunately, Institutions dealing with this type of crisis may find themselves ill equipped to respond in this way and may make the choice to deny and/or keep secret what has occurred. Sadly, this adds a great deal more harm to the victims/survivors, their families, the staff of the Institution, and the entire community. The Institution that chooses to take clear and compassionate responsibility for abuse that was perpetrated by one of its staff reduces and heals the impact of that abuse on the victims/survivors, family members, and community. This kind of response also restores the Institution's own trusted position within the community.

Jan Hindman, a well-respected researcher on the variables determining the impact of sexual abuse, has found that victims/survivors whose families and community respond to their disclosure with support and connection suffer far less than those victims/survivors whose families and community respond with denial, blame, or minimization.

Assess Priorities: Do not Seek Legal Protection for the Institution at the Expense of Safety for Children

An Institution must choose: it can respond in a self-protective manner, which can deepen the pain for victims/survivors, their families, and the community and can continue to place children at risk; OR, it can respond with an open, compassionate attitude that will bring healing to victims/survivors, their families, the community, and the Institution. By responding with openness and compassion, the Institution will be supporting those children who have been abused and will be protecting other children from the potential of abuse.

When an Institution is faced with sexual abuse charges against one of its staff, it is likely that the Institution's lawyers will become involved. The lawyer's priority is to decrease the liability of the Institution. Thus, the Institution's response to the victim/survivor and the community may be a vague and non-committal response such as "we are saddened by the recent events and hope to move through this stressful time as quickly as possible." This type of response often leaves victims/survivors feeling more hurt and the community unclear on what actually occurred. While this approach may appear to minimize the

Institution's liability, it impedes the healing process for victims/survivors and does not restore safety and trust within the Institution or the community.

A more effective response to consider would be: "We are deeply saddened to hear that children entrusted to our care may have been sexually abused by one of our staff. We are learning more about the details of these incidents and plan to keep communication open regarding the investigation and our response to these allegations. We support these children (or adults) for coming forward and thank them for giving us the opportunity to ensure safety at our Institution." This type of response validates the victim/survivor's experience, which leads to healing. It also shows the community that the Institution cares about the safety of children and is proactive in taking steps to ensure their safety.

The Institution may be concerned that such a compassionate response as outlined above could encourage more victims/survivors to come forward and result in the Institution eventually facing a larger financial loss. Ideally, all victims/survivors of a perpetrator would be encouraged to come forward. Not responding to the full extent possible to a perpetrator's criminal behavior against children could have far greater implications in the future if not dealt with immediately. Most importantly, when perpetrators of child sexual abuse are not held fully accountable for their actions, they may remain free to continue committing crimes against children.

Recognize the Institution's Need for Healing

An Institution in which sexual abuse has occurred has also been victimized by the perpetrator. A person who sexually abuses can be very skilled at manipulating the system and tricking professional peers into thinking all is well. A child sexual abuser weaves a sophisticated web of secrecy and control and when the strands of that web are revealed, others will feel betrayed and violated as well. The Institution's ideals, values, and staff have been used by the abuser to gain access to the children he/she wished to abuse.

Often it is only when the abuse is publicly revealed that the staff of that Institution realizes in hindsight ways in which they were manipulated and becomes aware of signs they missed along the way. Or, if the perpetrator has been very popular and respected among peers (as well as among families), some may blame the victims/survivors and side with the perpetrator. Because of this experience of confusion and deception, it is of utmost importance that the Institution's administration respond to the alleged abuse in a way that provides their staff with opportunities for safe, open, *professionally facilitated* dialogue about their experiences and their feelings.

Schedule Training from Your Local Sexual Assault Response Center

One of the first actions that an Institution can take when there has been a disclosure of sexual abuse is to contact their local sexual assault response center. Within the limits of confidentiality, the sexual assault response center staff can:

- support and guide the Institution in determining their options,
- refer the Institution to other helpful resources,

- provide staff training on responding to sexual abuse, and
- provide staff support, including opportunities for safe, open dialogue.

Training and support sessions facilitated by sexual assault center staff can cover the guidelines in this protocol and give administrators and staff at the Institution a chance to ask questions and clarify areas of confusion. Abuse and its harmful effects thrive in an atmosphere of confusion, poor communication, and secrecy. It is important that this training is offered to *all employees and staff of the Institution at the same time* to minimize a split between the staff who were in day-to-day contact with the alleged abuser and the victim/survivor and the administrators who are directing the Institution's response to the abuse. It is valuable to develop staff-signed documentation of attendance at these trainings to ensure that everyone receives the information.

Develop an Internal Protocol for Responding to Victims/Survivors who Contact the Institution to Disclose Abuse

The Institution should have an internal protocol for responding to victims/survivors who contact the Institution to disclose abuse. This protocol should designate a neutral third-party—detached from the Institution—to handle any and all disclosures of sexual abuse. Our model recommends that your local sexual assault response center be this designated third party.

When an Institution receives a disclosure of sexual abuse from someone by telephone, letter, or in-person, the staff in contact with the person making the disclosure should first respond with compassion. Good guidelines to follow are: believe the person, stay calm, and reassure the person that you are glad that they told you. The staff receiving the disclosure should not attempt to conduct an investigation. Institution staff should explain the protocol for handling abuse disclosures, give the person the phone number of the local sexual assault response center, and ask the person to contact the center. Next, staff should inform administrators of the Institution of the disclosure and staff and administrators should immediately follow state guidelines for mandated reporting of sexual abuse (see page 17 of this document for more on mandated reporting). Administrators should then immediately contact the local sexual assault response center.

It is likely that someone who has been sexually abused by a member of an Institution will contact the Institution not only to disclose abuse but also to find support, guidance, and/or pastoral care. It is paramount that any attempt by a victim/survivor or family member to reach out for such help be met with openness, care, and compassion. The Institution has a responsibility to do this. However, it is also important that the person responding to this initial disclosure and/or request for support do so following the guidelines stated above and refer the victim/survivor to the sexual assault response center.

A central part of healing for many victims/survivors will include healing their relationship with the Institution itself. Just as a child who has been abused within a family may look to the non-offending parent for support, a victim/survivor who was sexually abused within an Institution may go to a non-offending member of the Institution for the same purpose. In a situation such as this, it is important that both the non-offending

parent and/or the Institution respond in a very caring way. However, neither a non-offending parent nor an Institution should attempt to provide therapeutic support. Therapeutic support can be essential to healing and should be provided by professionals outside of the Institution.

Professionals outside of the Institution with experience in responding to issues of sexual abuse can help provide appropriate support and/or referrals for therapeutic support. The Institution should be aware of the limitations of support they can offer and explain to victim/survivors and family members that they may be able to provide additional healing options to the victim/survivor through their shared connection with the local sexual assault response center.

In all instances, when a victim/survivor requests that an investigation of the abuse be conducted and/or is seeking legal, financial, or professional advice, the Institution should refer the victim/survivor to the sexual assault response center. The Institution's internal policies should clearly state this procedure and all Institution staff should be trained in these procedures. The sexual assault response center can provide this type of training for Institution staff.

Research shows that people who sexually abuse children will most likely have more than one victim. When an Institution learns that a child in its care has been sexually abused by one of its employees, the Institution should also encourage others who may have been victimized to come forward. The length of time that the perpetrator has been employed by the Institution may affect the number of children who have been sexually abused at the Institution and could come forward. Some of those who come forward may no longer be directly associated with the Institution and could now be adults.

As stated previously, it may be tempting for an Institution to handle disclosures themselves and to investigate and manage the claims internally. While this response may be well intended, what it actually does is deny the victim/survivor and the Institution the fair opportunity to be informed of the legal and healing options available and runs the risk of interfering with an investigation by civil authorities. Additionally, such an internal response keeps the Institution unsafe, a place where child molesters may inadvertently be protected and their victim/survivor's unsupported—fertile ground for an abuser to operate. By using services offered through your local sexual assault response center, both victims/survivors and the Institution can be supported and informed of their options.

Develop an Internal Protocol for Preventing Sexual Abuse and for Responding to Allegations

In addition to having an internal protocol for responding to victims/survivors who contact the Institution to disclose abuse, the Institution should have an internal protocol for preventing sexual abuse and for ensuring that any future abuse is handled appropriately. An Internal protocol such as this is proactive and helps the Institution to be accountable and responsible.

The matter of accountability and responsibility is a complex but necessary component of the healing process. A document called *Call to Reform the Archdiocese of Boston* (9/2003)*, written by more than twenty survivors of clergy sexual abuse, outlined for Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley of Boston what the church could do to create a safer environment to protect all children and adults. Important aspects of this process are spelled out for the church but could be applied to all Institutions. The following outline has been adapted from this document:

- Members, volunteers, and employees of the Institution will attend yearly trainings offered by outside professionals on:
 - State Mandatory Reporting Laws.
 - Power dynamics and how power can be used to help or to harm.
 - Child abuse (sexual, physical, emotional)
- The Institution will establish and implement a policy that insures that the mandatory reporting requirements are being followed.
- The Institution will consistently speak out against the abuse of children and adults.
- The Institution, in their regular bulletins or newsletters, will provide information about resources for individuals and their families who have been and/or who are being abused.
- The Institution, once the abuse allegation is validated, will terminate employment of the abuser as well as anyone who has knowingly either disregarded signs that abuse was occurring or failed to report the suspected abuse of children or adults.
- The Institution will create an environment of safety for children and adults by:
 - Extensively screening potential employees.
 - Refraining from hiring anyone with a history of abusive behavior.
 - Engaging in an internal review process to address power dynamics (how power was abused and ways to use it in positive, healing ways) specifically related to positions within the Institution.
 - Publicly adopting a clear protocol for responding to any future allegations of abuse.
- The Institution will implement an independent outreach and advocacy program (engaging an outside agency) to:
 - Determine eligibility and appropriate coverage for financial assistance to victims/survivors and their family members, whether for medical or mental health treatment, inpatient or outpatient.
 - Provide reimbursement to victims/survivors and any secondary victims/survivors (such as parents, siblings, significant others) for money already spent on therapy and other victim/survivor related expenses.
 - Protect the victim/survivor from having to approach and negotiate directly with the Institution.
 - Assure victims/survivors that their records will not be used against them.

* For More Information on this document please contact Kathy Dwyer at wolfkmd@aol.com, Dale Walsh at dalewalsh@aol.com or Ann Hagan Webb at annhaganwebb@yahoo.com

Provide Monetary Restitution that is Administered to Victims/Survivors by a Neutral Third-Party

If the Institution is able to offer funding for victims/survivors and family members to get treatment, it is recommended that this funding be administered by an objective third-party such as a sexual assault response center. With such an arrangement, victims/survivors and their families do not have to go directly to the Institution for treatment funding. Privacy is protected. The Institution and the sexual assault response center should work together to determine a process for maintaining the confidentiality of those seeking financial resources from the Institution, while providing information to the Institution to support these requests.

Write a “Clarification Letter” to Victims/Survivors, their Families and the Community

After abuse allegations have been investigated and the Institution has had time to process and understand what abuse occurred, the Institution can further the healing process by writing a “clarification letter” to victims/survivors, their families, and the community. The sexual assault response center can help you with this clarification process by connecting you with a professional who is specifically trained in this area.

Some of the issues addressed in the clarification letter include: naming the abuser(s), stating the number of known victims/survivors (no names), and reporting the extent of the abuse and the time period over which the perpetrator(s) was abusing. Additionally, the Institution should identify signs of abuse that were there but are only now seen in hindsight (such as, the abuser was known to take the children away from the Institution in secrecy and/or without other staff present). The letter should address what they are now doing to prevent such signs from being missed in the future (such as, a new policy that no staff be allowed to leave the Institution with children unless for an approved purpose and with other staff). Finally, the Institution should express a strong desire to hear feedback regarding other issues needing further clarification and should establish a safe procedure to receive this feedback.

Provide a Public Forum for Addressing Allegations of Abuse

Just as child sexual abuse within a family hurts all members of the family, child sexual abuse occurring in a trusted relationship within an Institution hurts not only the child involved but the child’s family, the Institution, and the community as a whole. This is so whether the abuse is disclosed while the abused person is a child or many years later as an adult. Trust has been violated for all. The violation is often felt more profoundly, in fact, when the disclosure of abuse occurs many years later: the community feels it has been deceived, that it had entrusted the Institution with their children during a period of ongoing abuse.

Therefore, we recommend that the Institution where the abuse occurred hold a public forum to acknowledge the abuse, to address issues of concern, to honor and remember the victims/survivors of the abuse, and to take necessary steps to begin the healing and

rebuilding of trust. However, it is most important that the Institution first seek input from victims/survivors to determine if such a forum is desired and, if so, what they would like included. Victims/Survivors should not be named unless they have specifically requested that they be identified.

Who should be invited to the forum?

A major necessary step in all situations is for the Institution to publicly apologize to the children, the families, and the community and to begin the dialogue establishing steps that will be taken to prevent abuse of other children in the future. Additionally, the forum should provide an open environment for dialogue and questions about the allegations and disclosures. The public aspect of the apology is needed to regain community trust by demonstrating a refusal to cover up internal problems of abuse. *Relief from suffering for the victims/survivors, their families, and their communities is the primary goal in this model of a public forum.*

Such a public forum would be more than a purely informational meeting: it would incorporate a clearly sensitive component that validates, or ‘bears witness’ to the victim/survivor’s experience. The Institution administrators would acknowledge their own level of awareness of the abuse, along a continuum:

- there may have been no awareness and no signs;
- there may have been signs which only hindsight has made clear; or,
- there may have been complicity in suppressing public awareness of the problem and in developing a response that was compromising, inappropriate and ineffective.

Each situation and each Institution is unique. Therefore, after consultation with victims/survivors, the particular steps and format for the public forum will vary. In a school setting, for example, there might be a series of meetings with parents and/or children with school administrators. Or, in faith communities, there might be more of a spiritually based communal healing ritual. No matter what the setting, letters written (signed or anonymous) by the victims/survivors could be read to those in attendance who in turn bear witness to the victims/survivors’ experience. This could be followed by a brief closing and an opportunity for the attendees to offer their support. Victims/survivors and their families have the option to be present or to have a representative read their letter. In either situation, it would be important for the Institution to engage, as facilitator of the forum or ceremony, a well-trained, sensitive mental health professional whose skill-set and experience includes familiarity with healing approaches.

(Contact Walter Bera, Ph.D., Founder/Director Kenwood Therapy Center, Minneapolis, MN for more information about how to design and implement a congregational healing ceremony using this model.)

GUIDELINES FOR THE VICTIM/SURVIVOR AND FAMILY

Connect with Your Local Sexual Assault Response Center

One of the first steps to take if your child has disclosed sexual abuse or if you are an adult who is ready to disclose past sexual abuse is to contact your local sexual assault response center for guidance. As recommended by this model for responding to Institutional sexual abuse, sexual assault response center staff will be ready to guide you in the process of disclosure, treatment, and legal options.

Report the Abuse to Authorities

We recognize how complicated the criminal justice system can be to someone who has experienced a crime of this magnitude. Maine's sexual assault response centers can be of assistance in explaining the legal options available to victims/survivors and their families and can provide referrals to legal resources.

Upon disclosure of abuse of a child in an Institution, you should first consider reporting the abuse to the police department. The police department is the proper authority to handle child sexual abuse occurring in an Institution. Contacting the Institution at which the abuse occurred before contacting civil authorities can interfere with the police department's investigation of the crime. It is important that the alleged abuser does not have the opportunity to prepare a defense before the police conduct their initial interview. Your local sexual assault response center can help you through this reporting process.

Use Your Packet from the Sexual Assault Response Center to Help Obtain the Treatment that Is Right for You

When considering treatment for victims/survivors and their family members, there are many options available: individual and group therapy, specialized treatment programs, self-help support groups, psychiatric and medication support, and complementary therapy approaches such as experiential therapies and bodywork. The type of treatment that a victim/survivor or family member chooses depends upon their personal needs. Therapy needs may shift and change during the course of treatment. Options for sexual abuse treatment as well as contact information for treatment providers can be supplied by the sexual assault response centers for your consideration

The packet of information you receive from the sexual assault response center may include information on the various effects of sexual abuse, reading suggestions and list of resources including treatment options available within your local community.

Treatment that may benefit the abused child and the family includes individual therapy for the child or other family members, family therapy to heal the impact on the whole family, group therapy for the child or a support group for parents of other children abused in the Institution.

Group therapy options may be offered and coordinated through the sexual assault response center. For individual and family therapy, you may need to find the appropriate therapist yourself. Therapists have varied backgrounds, styles, expertise and skills. In this packet and the one you will receive from the sexual assault response center, you will find a list of questions and additional guidelines for finding the therapist that is right for you.

If you choose to follow through on treatment options and/or if money for restitution is available from the Institution, you may want to consider using an advocate available through the sexual assault response center to help navigate the system of resources available to you and your family and, if applicable, the criminal justice system. This advocate will be specifically trained in responding to child sexual abuse in an Institution.

Find a Therapist Who is Right for You

Many victims/survivors of sexual abuse engage in therapy with the hope of finding increased support and understanding through their healing journey. It can be an overwhelming process to find a skilled therapist who meets the unique needs of each individual victim/survivor. Making the phone call and scheduling the initial interview are the first steps. The next step is deciding if a therapist is a good match for you.

The following list of sample questions can be helpful in interviewing a therapist. It is not necessary to ask all of the questions; you may wish to pick and choose those that are relevant and important to you. Remember, you have the right to interview the therapist and it is okay to decline someone's services for any reason. It is your treatment. Your feelings of comfort and safety are essential to the healing process.

Questions Regarding Experience and Training:

- What academic degrees and specialized training do you have?
- From what school did you earn your degree?
- Are you licensed and at what level?
- Are you able to provide references from people who can speak to your experience and background? (professional colleagues and supervisors).
- How many years of experience do you have?
- What kind of specialized training have you had in sexual abuse?
- Are you currently treating other sexual abuse victims/survivors?
- What kind of specialized interventions do you use with clients who have been sexually abused? Can you explain how and when these are helpful?
- Have you provided testimony in court as a sexual abuse "expert"?
- How much experience have you had working with diverse populations? What is your philosophy about homosexuality?
- Do you deal with anything other than sexual abuse in your practice? What other types of cases?

Treatment Issues:

- What kind of treatment do you provide? Can you educate me about different types of therapy?
- How long might therapy take?
- What can I hope for throughout the process?
- How will I know when I am finished?
- Are there any eligibility requirements?
- What hours are you available?
- What is your fee? Are you insurance reimbursable? Do you offer a sliding fee?
- What do you provide for crisis intervention?
- Do you maintain written notes and may I have access to them? Who else may have access to them?
- What is your policy regarding confidentiality?
- How often and for what length of time will we meet?
- Would you report your clients if they physically or sexually abuse children? Would there be an instance when you would not?
- Are you contracted by any other affiliated agencies or entities such as the Diocese?
- Will you testify in court if necessary?
- What will you do if my records are subpoenaed?

Points for Consideration:

- How did the therapist respond to my questions and needs?
- What was my “gut feeling” reaction after my session?
- Could I imagine myself disagreeing with this therapist and having it be okay?
- Considering my own unique values, biases, attitudes and beliefs how well does this therapist “fit”?
- How much do I feel this therapist will be working for and with me? 100%?

REPORTING OF INSTITUTIONAL SEXUAL ABUSE

If you know or have reason to suspect that a member of an Institution, such as a childcare facility, church, school, or social service agency, has sexually abused a child OR if you are a victim/survivor of this type of abuse, you have the following options for reporting the abuse to the authorities. The sexual assault response center can assist you in determining what the best option is for you.

Police: You have the option of making a report to the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction of where the crime occurred. They will take the information you give them and investigate the allegations. Providing the names of the victim and perpetrator as well as the location and date the abuse occurred can expedite the investigation. The statute of limitations for reporting past abuse *may* limit the ability of the police to take action.

District Attorney/Attorney General: You have the option of making a report to the District Attorney's office in the jurisdiction of where the crime occurred. You also have the option of making a report to the State of Maine Attorney General's office. If there is sufficient information to indicate that a crime likely occurred, they will pass the information on to a law enforcement agency to investigate. Providing the names of the victim and perpetrator as well as the location and date the abuse occurred can expedite the investigation. The statute of limitations for reporting past abuse *may* limit the ability of the police to take action.

Department of Human Services (DHS): If the Institution at which you suspect or know a child has been abused *is a childcare facility*, you can make a report to DHS. If you are an adult victim/survivor and know or suspect that the perpetrator is still employed by the childcare facility, you also have the option of making a report to DHS. The information you provide may lead to an investigation by a DHS caseworker. If the caseworker finds that a crime has likely been committed, he or she will notify the police.

If the Institution is *not a childcare facility*, such as a school or church, *AND you have reason to believe that the parents or guardians of the child know or have reason to suspect that their child is at risk* at that Institution and the parents have not taken action to protect the child, you have the option of making a report to DHS. The information you provide may lead to an investigation by a DHS caseworker of the family to determine whether the parent or guardian has put their child in danger.

Institution Itself: You have the option to report the abuse to the Institution. Doing so, however, could seriously complicate and compromise any future investigation by the police and civil authorities. For this reason, we recommend that your first call be to your local sexual assault response center to learn more about your options.

REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES OF INSTITUTIONS

Many professionals and others who work for and/or volunteer at Institutions are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected abuse of a child to the appropriate authorities. If you are a mandated reporter you **MUST** follow the policies ascribed to by the Institution to which you are affiliated **AND/OR** the Code of Ethics of your professional affiliation.

If you report known or suspected abuse within the Institution where you work or volunteer to the administrators of this Institution and they in turn do not report it to the authorities, you still have the legal responsibility to make a report to the authorities yourself.

If the Institution for which you work or volunteer does not have a mandated reporting policy for you to rely on, this **DOES NOT** exempt you from your responsibility as a mandated reporter. Title 22, Chapter 1071 of the Maine Criminal Statutes lists those who are mandated reporters and their responsibilities as such. It is important to note that in 2003, the criminal statutes were updated to include church officials as mandated reporters. This includes all individuals under the employ of a religious Institution (including priests, ministers, teachers, volunteers, janitors, etc.).

We understand that the mandated reporting laws can be confusing and can be interpreted in many ways. If you are unsure whether or not to make a report, it is **ALWAYS** better to err on the side of caution and make the report. *Remember, a child's safety may be at risk.*

For further guidance, please refer to the previous section "Reporting of Institutional Sexual Abuse." Also, you may call the Department of Human Services for a copy of their manual on Mandated Reporting.

TREATMENT FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSERS WHO HAVE MOLESTED CHILDREN IN AN INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Disclosures or discoveries of Institutional child sexual abuse rarely come out during childhood; more often, facts about the abuse come out years later in adulthood. Regardless of when the abuse becomes known, the behavior to be reckoned with is the sexual abuse of a child by an adult in a position of power over the child. Treatment of the child sexual abuser should contain the same components, whether the abuse is exposed during childhood or adulthood.

To be effective, treatment for child sexual abusers must include two major areas of focus: (1) self-reflection leading to self-awareness and acknowledgement of responsibility for the behavior, and (2) *personal* restitution to the victims/survivors and their families. While the first area of focus is obviously important, the second is no less important. It is by relinquishing his/her position of self-interest and self-protection in favor of empathy and caring for others' needs that the abuser can start to build a sense of positive self-worth that could prevent him/her from abusing in the future. He/she must try to restore what he/she has taken from the child – innocence and self-worth – and what he/she has taken from the child's family – trust in the offender and in the Institution the offender represents (e.g., the church, scout troop, school, etc.).

If restitution is provided only by the Institution and comes primarily in the form of monetary settlement, the victim/survivor could still be confused and unsettled about his/her role in the abuse. Thus, the money might meet the letter of the law, but does little to help a victim/survivor understand a myriad of possible questions such as: "Why did I 'let' it happen?" "Wasn't it my fault too ... I didn't tell anyone for a long time?" "Sometimes it felt good ... I must have wanted it." The abuser often confuses the child by presenting the abuse as a "mutual" act (e.g., part of a loving relationship, a natural way to learn about one's body, etc.) and as something "special" for this child only. If not clarified, this confusion may continue into adulthood.

If the abuser has first manipulated the child's parents' into trusting him/her, then the child may have heard the parents' respect for the abuser and may have been encouraged by his/her parents to listen to the abuser. Such a scenario can add to the child's confusion about who is responsible for the abuse. When abuse occurs within a scout troop situation, for example, the parent perceives the scout leader as being noble and full of good qualities that the parents hope the scout leader will impart to their child. When abuse occurs within a church or other religious Institution, the parents perceive the priest/minister/rabbi as holy and spiritual—someone to be respected and honored. Children adopt their parents' attitudes and indeed are easily persuaded by abusers in these powerful positions. When a child experiences abuse in these situations, it is very important for the adults involved, including the abuser, to clarify for the child exactly how he/she was manipulated.

Writing Clarification Letters

In addition to any monetary settlement, restitution must also come directly from the abuser in the form of “clarification letters.” The abuser, in treatment with a therapist specifically trained in treating sexual perpetrators, will be guided through the clarification process. We include information about this process here so that the Institution, as well as victims/survivors and family members, will have enough information about this critical step in healing to evaluate whether the abuser’s clarification letter is on target.

The abuser should write the following three clarification letters: one to the victim/survivor and their family, one to the Institution, and one to the community.

In the letter to the victim/survivor and family the abuser should describe:

- How he/she took advantage of trusting qualities in the family and engaged the child
- How he/she persuaded the child it was “ok” behavior that they “shared” as part of their special relationship
- How he/she is 100% responsible for every aspect of the abuse
- How he/she persuaded the child not to tell
- How he/she was able to keep the family from suspecting
- What harm the child has likely experienced as a result of the abuse

The primary aim of the clarification letter is to reduce the shame and self-blame experienced by the victim/survivor and the family. Such a clarification letter can help restore the parent-child relationship, which has been undermined throughout the secretive abuse period and often for years afterwards.

Clarification letters to the Institution and the community will include much of the same information as the letter to the victim/survivor and family. However, these letters will specifically address how the abuser took advantage of and manipulated the Institution and community and what harm he/she caused by doing this. To assess whether a clarification letter to a victim/survivor, the family, the community, or the Institution is on target, the reader can ask the following questions:

Did the abuser:

- Replace thinking errors and manipulative “tricks” with truths
- Replace confusion with clarity about what happened
- Replace control with respect and empathy for others
- Replace fear and threats with a sense of safety
- Replace shame and blame with self-respect
- Replace minimization with taking 100% responsibility

To better understand sexually abusing behavior, its impact on victims/survivors and families, and for developing sound clarification letters please refer to the following resources:

- Hindman, J. (1989). *Just Before Dawn*. Ontario, OR: AlexAndria Associates.
Hindman, J. (1991). *The Mourning Breaks*. Ontario, OR: AlexAndria Associates.
Ostis, C. (2002). *What's happening in our family: Understanding sexual abuse through metaphors*. Brandon, VT: The Safer Society Press.

While the primary aim of the clarification is for the healing of the child, the family and the Institution, the secondary aim of the clarification process is to provide an opportunity for the abuser to heal, change, and ultimately, be less at risk of abusing in the future. The clarification process should help the abuser begin to develop positive personal qualities: a sense of pride, responsibility, and strength gained from righting a wrong, and empathy for his/her victims/survivors and families.

Sexual abuse of children is a shame-based behavior. As long as abusers are denied the opportunity to care about the person they have hurt and to do something positive to repair that harm, the abuser remains in a self-protective place of minimizing the behavior. Such a stance contributes greatly to the child remaining stuck in self-diminishing thought distortions about the abuse that in turn can lead to increased shame and low self-esteem. Even if the abuse has stopped, the less visible emotional and psychological harm continues for the victim/survivor as well as for the abuser. This increases the potential that the abusing behavior will resume.

Minimal Components to Sex Offender Treatment and Recovery*

Abusers must:

- Confront their denial and fully admit their abusing behavior.
- Recognize and decrease their use of thinking errors and manipulative patterns in all areas of their life.
- Identify their risk factors.
- Increase empathy for their victims/survivors by understanding and taking responsibility for the harm they have caused through personally written clarification letters/apologies.
- Increase their social skills and learn new or strengthen existing non-abusive activities and interests.
- Work to decrease their deviant arousal, understand their cycle of abusive behavior, and develop a relapse prevention plan that encompasses a holistic life-style change.
- If and when appropriate, explore the impact of the abuser's own childhood victimization.

* Adapted from Murphy, W.D. & Smith, T.A. (1996). Sex offenders against children. In J. Briere, L. Berliner, J.A. Bulkley, C. Jenny, & T. Reid (Eds.), *The APSAC handbook on child maltreatment* (pp. 175-191). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

RESOURCES

Sexual Assault Centers

Many resources are available by calling the hotline numbers listed and by visiting each center's website.

Statewide Hotline Number 1-800-871-7741 – This number will connect you with the sexual assault response center for services in your area.

Southern Kennebec, Knox & Waldo Counties

Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center, Augusta, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-871-7741

Website: www.silent-no-more.org

Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties

Rape Response Services, Bangor, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-310-0000

Website: www.raperesponseservices.com

Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc and Lincoln Counties

Sexual Assault Support Services of Mid-coast Maine, Brunswick, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-822-5999

Website: www.sassmm.org

Hancock & Washington Counties

Downeast Sexual Assault Services, Ellsworth, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-228-2470

Website: www.downeasthealth.org

Franklin County

Sexual Assault Victim's Emergency Services, Farmington

Hotline Number: 1-800-871-7741

Website: www.savesrapecrisis.org

Androscoggin County

Sexual Assault Crisis Center, Lewiston, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-871-7741

Website: www.sacc1984.com

Oxford County

Rape Education and Crisis Hotline, Norway, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-871-7741

www.reachmaine.org

Cumberland & York Counties

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-313-9900

Website: www.sarsonline.org

Aroostook County

Sexual Trauma and Recovery Services, Presque Isle, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-550-3304

Northern Kennebec and Somerset Counties

Rape Crisis Assistance & Prevention, Waterville, Maine

Hotline Number: 1-800-525-4441

Website: www.watervillerape.org

District Attorney Offices in Maine

Androscoggin County

Auburn: (207) 784-1397

Aroostook County

Caribou: (207) 498-2557

Houlton: (207) 532-4294

Cumberland County

Portland: (207) 871-8384

Franklin County

Farmington: (207) 778-5890

Hancock County

Ellsworth: (207) 667-4621

Kennebec County

Augusta: (207) 623-1156

Knox County

Rockland: (207) 594-0424

Lincoln County

Wiscasset: (207) 882-7312

Oxford County

South Paris: (207) 743-8282

Penobscot County

Bangor: (207) 942-8552

Piscataquis County

Dover-Foxcroft: (207) 564-2181

Sagadahoc County

Bath: (207) 443-8204

Somerset County

Skowhegan: (207) 474-2423

Waldo County

Belfast: (207) 338-2512

Washington County

Machias: (207) 255-4425

Calais: (207) 454-3159

York County

Alfred: (207) 324-8001

Biddeford: (207) 282-3006

Springvale: (207) 324-1174

Office of the Attorney General

Augusta: (207) 626-8515/626-8500

Maine Department of Human Services

1-800-452-1999

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
FOR SURVIVORS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE

SNAP (Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests)

P.O. Box 6416

Chicago, IL 60680

Toll-free phone: 1-877-762-7432 (1-877-SNAPHEALS)

Email: www.SNAPnetwork.org

Regional SNAP Co-Coordinator: Bill Gately

Phone: (508) 743-0297

Email: billgately@snapnetwork.org

Regional SNAP Co-Coordinator: Ann Hagan Webb

Phone: (781) 239-1182

Email: annhaganwebb@snapnetwork.org

SNAP Web Master: Phil Saviano

Phone: (617) 983-5075

Email: saviano@snapnetwork.org

The Link Up (Survivors of Clergy Abuse)

1412 W. Argyle St., #2

Chicago, IL 60640

Phone: (773) 334-2296

www.thelinkup.com

National Organization of Male Sexual Victimization

www.malesurvivor.org

Survivors First

P.O. Box 81-172

Wellesley, MA 02481

Phone: (617) 567-7575 (from Massachusetts)

(877) LIGHT-22 (from out of state)

www.survivorsfirst.org

thelighthouse77@aol.com

STTOP (Speak Truth To Power)

P.O. Box 610156

Newton, MA 02461

www.sttop.org

Voice of the Faithful – VOTF

www.votf.org

Voice of the Faithful in Maine - VOTF Maine

Michael Sweatt

P.O. Box 522

Portland, ME 04112-0522

Phone: (207) 774-0227

www.votfmaine.org

msweatt@votfmaine.org

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Professional resources on the effects and treatment of child sexual abuse, including assessment and treatment of abusers.

Note: While the following references are primarily oriented toward understanding the effects of and treatment for child abuse when it occurs in a trusted *family* relationship, the information is also pertinent to understanding child sexual abuse when it occurs within a trusted *institutional* relationship. It is important to remember that in many ways these institutions are extensions of the family: the church where families send their children for religious direction, the school where the family sends their children for education, or the scouting organization where the family sends their children for developing many skills. The betrayal dynamics are similar when abuse occurs in *any* trusted relationship.

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Contact Dwyer @ wolfkmd@aol.com, Walsh dalewalsh@aol.com or Hagan Webb @ annhaganwebb@yahoo.com for more information.
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