

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **Contact:** Susan Lewis 1-877-739-3895 Ext 102
May 14, 2002

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) Asserts that Cardinal Law's Deposition is missing the point!

Enola, PA (May 14, 2002) Reacting to the recent deposition by Cardinal Law, Karen Baker, Project Director for the NSVRC said that this latest development in the deluge of reports of sexual abuse by priest continues to demonstrate a wrongful focus by the Church, and to some degree, by the media. Law said that sexual abuse is a "gravely sinful act", but Baker responded that sexual assault is a "gravely harmful crime." "The point," she continued, "is the great harm, the devastation, the betrayal and the violation of the child's body and soul, and not the explanations, justifications, or even the regrets of the perpetrators and their allies."

In a 'Letter to the Editor' of 26 national papers, (see www.NSVRC.org) Baker emphasized the needs of the victims and enumerated many of the lasting effects of sexual assault. She spoke of the actions that promote healing and the importance of support. The letter explained that "(i)n most of stories that surfaced, these important actions that promote healing have not been afforded the victims. Instead, these courageous voices, who tried to be heard and believed, found a cloak of secrecy, denial and disapproval in their community, no perpetrator accountability, a betrayal of trust by the Church they loved, and years of heartache."

Delilah Rumburg, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, the parent organization of the NSVRC, asserts that "it is not the business of the anti-sexual violence movement to tell the Church how to reform, but so long as justifications and public relations take center stage in the crisis, there can be no real reform, resolution or healing for the Church, the survivors, or the public." Rumburg declared, "it's an outrage that this continues to be a story of the Church and its damage control." She added, "it is a sad, but important opportunity for society to recognize the deeply harmful crime of sexual assault and to take responsibility for making our society safe for children."

Karen Baker says that she hopes the media will take the initiative to refocus this crisis on the real story: the victims and their needs. "If the general public could feel the pain, and understand the horror of living for years in agonizing confusion, fear and secrecy, they would realize that easy expressions of wrongdoing really miss the point!"