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March 16, 2016

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Chester County Announces  
Spike in Child Abuse Reports**

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced that the office had compiled and analyzed child abuse reporting for the last four years. Those statistics showed a large increase in child abuse reports in Chester County.

The yearly total of child abuse reports in Chester County are as follows:

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>No. of Reports</u></b>
2012	219
2013	291
2014	414
2015	1306

Based on reports to date for 2016, the District Attorney's Office estimates that there will be 1,700-1,800 child abuse reports for this upcoming year. Thus, the growth continues.

The child abuse reports come to the District Attorney's Office from the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Children, Youth and Families. Every child abuse report is reviewed by the Chester County District Attorney's Office, then handled by the Chester County Detectives (the

investigative arm of the District Attorney's Office) or referred out to local law enforcement for investigation.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "The explosive growth in child abuse reports has been caused by three main factors. First, after the conviction of Jerry Sandusky in the high-profile Penn State case, overall awareness and sensitivity to child abuse has increased. Second, changes to Pennsylvania law have expanded the types of incidents and categories of people that are required to report child abuse. Third, the District Attorney's Office, with the support of the Chester County Commissioners, has increased the focus on child abuse, leading to more cases."

Jerry Sandusky was convicted in 2012 of abusing multiple child victims. He was sentenced to 30-60 years imprisonment.

As a result of the Sandusky investigation and conviction, there were sweeping changes to child abuse laws in Pennsylvania in 2013 and 2014. The new laws expanded the category of people considered "mandatory reporters," who are required to report any suspected child abuse. Mandatory reporters now include all school employees, health care providers, child care providers, clergy members, and other categories. Pennsylvania law also expanded the definition of "child abuse," covering more activities.

In Chester County, there have been several high-profile child abuse cases. For instance, defendant Warren Yerger was convicted of sexually abusing four children over the course of two decades. In 2015, he was sentenced to 339-690 years imprisonment.

Deputy District Attorney Deborah Ryan, the head of the DA's Child Abuse Unit, stated, "Using a multi-disciplinary approach, the Chester County Children's Advocacy Center has been extremely successful at uncovering and prosecuting more child abuse cases. We have outstanding investigators, health care professionals, and social service providers who work together to protect these children and pursue these predators."

Kevin Dykes, Chief of the Chester County Detectives, stated, "In 2011, the Chester County Detectives had one sergeant and one detective assigned to child abuse cases. In 2012, anticipating the rise in child abuse cases, District Attorney Hogan re-assigned a second detective to child abuse from other duties. In 2014, with the support of the Chester County Commissioners, another detective was

added, giving us one sergeant and three full time detectives working child abuse. Even with this increased staffing, our detectives and prosecutors are working incredibly hard with local police just to keep up with the case load. They know that they cannot let up even for a second, because a child could be hurt by any delay.”

District Attorney Hogan added, “I have talked with my colleagues around Pennsylvania. They also are seeing tremendous growth in the number of child abuse cases. In order to keep protecting children, we are going to have to devote more law enforcement resources to child abuse cases. This will require more investigators and prosecutors, but that is a small price to pay for the good of our children.”

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan