

# Scientists Way Off Base In Blasting Pedophile Program

TT 8/22/86  
**T**he Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a group sponsored by the Church of Scientology, is doing a great disservice to the Florida Mental Health Institute, a state facility based in Tampa.

The "human rights" commission, which works out of the church's national headquarters in Clearwater, has started a national lobbying campaign to halt a federally-funded program at FMHI that seeks to determine the success rate of both psychotherapy and behavior modification in curbing child molestation.

The commission has circulated letters to national lawmakers and Florida PTA groups — letters that contain outlandish accusations about the FMHI program.

The letters, and accompanying petitions labeled "Save Our Children From Child Molesters," call the FMHI program "an outrageous and destructive psychological experiment ... that uses our own children as human guinea pigs to see what known child molesters will do to them." The letters imply that FMHI releases child molesters into the community to see how many youngsters they will attack.

The letters also attack FMHI for calling child molesters "pedophiles" since the Greek origin of that word is "child lover." And the letters claim that behavior modification has been shown to "create assassins out of people," that

"psychiatry has never cured one single child molester," and that the two types of treatment FMHI is using on the child molesters have already been proven ineffective.

Since the "human rights" commission is either unaware of the facts or is purposely ignoring them, we'd like to set the record straight.

First of all, FMHI is not releasing child molesters into the community. The 100 men it plans to work with over the next year will be free men — men who have no legal obligation to do anything about their problem. They will have either completed their prison sentences, be on probation or be seeking

help to change their behavior before they run afoul of the law. In other words, these men will be *volunteering* for the program.

And these are rules the program's director has said will be followed: If any of the participants tell FMHI of a crime they have committed, the crime will be reported to law enforcement officials. And if any of the men talk seriously about molesting a child while participating in the outpatient program, the parents of the child will be warned and the program client will be hospitalized.

Since there are few sex offender treatment programs in Florida — few nationwide, in fact — these men might

well receive no treatment at all if the FMHI program didn't exist. And since the typical pedophile is believed to commit 200 to 400 acts of child molestation in a lifetime, helping just 100 men curb their deviant appetites could have a significant impact on the future of many children in this and other Florida communities.

But even more important, the FMHI program is primarily devoted to finding the *best* treatment for pedophiles, not just one that has some effectiveness. The two treatments that will be tested — behavior modification and traditional psychotherapy — were not just pulled out of a hat. They were chosen after reviews of all previous studies on sexual offender treatment showed that certain applications of those two appeared the most beneficial.

Finally, it was not FMHI that chose the term "pedophiles" for these men. The mental health professionals there are not so heartless or removed from reality to think the actions of child molesters constitute anything but a sick kind of "love." Pedophiles is a word commonly used for child molesters — both by lay persons and authorities.

We hope the "human rights" commission will cease its vicious, unfounded attack on the program at FMHI. Or short of that, that its rantings will fall on deaf ears.