

## PUBLIC SAFETY

# Larry Nassar sex abuse allegations: History of the crimes, investigation

**From staff reports** USAToday Network

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In Senate panel today, elite gymnasts including Simone Biles are testifying on the FBI's handling of sexual abuse allegations against former USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar.

Here's a look at how the case unfolded. It all started with an email to IndyStar.

## Nassar's downfall begins

IndyStar began its "Out of Balance" series in March 2016, investigating USA Gymnastics' policies for handling sexual abuse allegations. Rachel Denhollander, of Louisville, read the coverage and emailed IndyStar.

"I recently read the article titled 'Out of Balance' published by the IndyStar. My experience may not be relevant to your investigation, but I am emailing to report an incident."

**AUGUST 2016:** How USA Gymnastics failed to report cases

In September, IndyStar published a story outlining complaints of sexual abuse made by two former gymnasts, one an Olympic medalist. By 2018, at least 150 people came forward with additional allegations.

**SEPTEMBER 2016:** Former USA Gymnastics doctor accused of abuse

## Who is Larry Nassar?

In a 2018 column, reporter Tim Evans wrote about his face-to-face meeting with Nassar as part of the investigative team. He consulted with medical experts after hearing about the "treatment" minors struggling with sports injuries received from the doctor, and reached out to Nassar. Nassar replied via email:

"I am very sorry for what has occurred with this misunderstanding of my medical care. It saddens me greatly to think that these gymnasts feel I offended them when I was trying to help them."

"I think it would be best for us to meet and discuss this so you have a good understanding of these procedures. I would like to meet at my house next week, Thursday morning at 9:30 am if that works for you. I would like the meeting to be private between you and I to openly discuss this."

## **What did Larry Nassar do?**

In November 2016, Michigan's Attorney General Bill Schuette said the accusations so far against Nassar were the "tip of the iceberg," calling him a predator. His office had begun working with the FBI on the case.

By that point, Nassar had been arrested on three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person younger than 13. He posted a \$1 million bond.

## **Child pornography charges**

The Lansing State Journal reported in 2016 that Nassar was indicted in December 2016 on federal charges of possession of child pornography and receipt or attempted receipt of child pornography.

According to the indictment, Nassar received or attempted to receive images of child pornography in 2004; and possessed thousands of images of child pornography between 2003 and 2016. Images included a person younger than 12 years old, the indictment said.

Nassar was then remanded into the custody of U.S. Marshals, according to court records.

## **USA Gymnastics CEO Steve Penny resigns**

In the midst of the Nassar scandal, it was revealed that USA Gymnastics CEO Steve Penny waited nearly five weeks in 2015 before reporting allegations to the FBI. He resigned in 2017, leaving with a \$1 million severance package.

He was later arrested in Texas, accused of destroying or hiding documents related to Nassar's activities there. He pleaded not guilty, and the case is pending.

**More:** Indianapolis FBI leader eyed head USA Gymnastics job after sitting on Nassar allegations

**Larry Nassar, Steve Penny and more:** Where are key players in USA Gymnastics scandal now?

## **Indianapolis FBI agent Michael Langeman fired**

Previously, the supervisory agent in the case was not named; he had been reassigned pending an internal investigation. FBI director Chris Ray confirmed Sept. 15 at the Senate hearings that Michael Langeman, the supervisory special agent involved in the case, has been dismissed.

In a Department of Justice Report, another agent, Jay Abbott, was singled out for lying about the field office's handling of the Nassar case.

As the FBI investigation into Larry Nassar languished in 2015, the head of USA Gymnastics told Abbott about a top security job in Olympic sports, IndyStar reported in 2018. Penny's lawyer confirmed the conversation took place, but said "any suggestion that Steve had the conversation with Abbott in order to impact the FBI investigation is false and defamatory."

Abbott retired from the FBI in January 2018.

## **Simone Biles speaks up about Nassar**

Using a Me Too hashtag, Simone Biles on Jan. 15, 2018, tweeted that she was one of the young women sexually abused by Nassar.

"I've felt a bit broken and the more I try to shut off the voice in my head, the louder it screams. I'm not afraid to tell my story anymore."

## Larry Nassar Netflix documentary

California filmmakers Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk examined the efforts of IndyStar journalists, who began looking into sexual-abuse allegations in March 2016.

The documentary, 'Athlete A,' was released by Netflix on June 24, 2020. 'Athlete A' refers to Maggie Nichols, who was believed to be the first athlete to bring a sexual abuse complaint about Nassar to USA Gymnastics' top officials in 2015.

## More voices

During his sentencing in Michigan for his first sexual assault trial, 156 women spoke over seven days about the abuse they encountered. He was sentenced in January 2018 to as many as 175 years in prison after pleading guilty to seven counts of first-degree criminal misconduct.

Eventually, USA Gymnastics reached a settlement agreement with survivors for \$425 million among 500 women who say Nassar, their coach or someone else affiliated with the sport sexually abused them.

**More:** Victims share what Larry Nassar did to them under the guise of medical treatment

Michigan State University also has paid out more than \$510 million since 2016 in connection with the Nassar scandal, as of earlier this month. Most of that money went to women and girls he abused.

## FBI's investigation of Nassar

A recently released Department of Justice report outlined the FBI's handling of 2015 sexual abuse allegations against Nassar. According to documents, he was first reported to the FBI's Indianapolis office in 2015.

During the FBI's nine-month delay in investigating the allegations, he continued to molest young girls under the guise of medical treatment.

**More:** Gymnasts, community react to report detailing massive FBI failure in Nassar investigation

On Oct. 5, 2021, less than a month after four elite gymnasts provided testimony, the DOJ announced it was reconsidering the decision not to prosecute former FBI agents involved in the botched investigation.