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HARTFORD, Conn. — June 10, 2019
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Updated 3:26 p.m. Central time June 11, 2019 with statement from Fairfield University

A $60 million settlement to be paid by Fairfield University and several Catholic organizations and individuals will go to as many as 170 Haitian children at a Catholic orphanage who were abused by convicted pedophile Douglas Perlitz.

U.S. District Judge Robert Chatigny issued an order in early June that would allow the settlement to take effect Aug. 27 if there are no successful challenges. He had tentatively approved the agreement in January.

In addition to the university, the settlement would be paid by the Society of Jesus of New England; the Order of Malta, American Association, USA; Haiti Fund Inc; Jesuit Fr. Paul E. Carrier; and Hope Carter.

Jayne Conroy, an attorney who represented the children, said the settlement was a long time in coming.

"It's life changing for the kids ... Haiti is a very difficult place. We are so anxious to finalize this settlement and find some justice for these kids," Conroy said.

The Jesuits' USA Northeast Province, which includes the Society of Jesus of New England, said in a statement in early 2019 after the tentative agreement was reached that although it was not responsible for oversight and management of the Haiti project, "we nonetheless deeply regret that anyone experienced any abuse, harm or suffering" in connection with it.

"We hope that this resolution of the litigation will provide some measure of closure and relief to all those affected, though we recognize the enduring pain that accompanies survivors of sexual abuse," the province said. "We continue to offer our prayers for all involved, and we hope that this resolution will, in some way, allow those affected to find some healing from these past events and some hope for the future."

In a statement sent to Catholic News Service late June 11, Jenn Anderson, Fairfield's vice president for marketing and communications, said: "Fairfield University is grateful that the class-action settlement received final approval from the court and funding will begin to flow to the victims in secure regular payouts over their lifetime. The university hopes that this settlement will give some measure of relief to the victims."

Perlitz, a 1992 Fairfield University graduate, was convicted on federal child abuse charges in 2010. He admitted that he repeatedly traveled to Haiti from 2001 to 2008 and engaged in illicit sexual activity with eight boys. He is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

Court testimony showed he was director and founder of Project Pierre Toussaint in Cap-Haitien, Haiti, and had visited an orphanage associated with the university and the Catholic organizations where he abused children.

The orphanage was supported by Haiti Fund Inc., a Connecticut-registered charity associated with the university, which is operated by the New England Jesuits. Carrier, former director of campus ministry at the school, appointed the fund's directors. He often visited Perlitz and the orphanage.

The Hartford Courant reported that donors contributed more than $2 million to the orphanage in the decade before Perlitz was indicted in 2009. After allegations of abuse at the orphanage became known in 2008, Haitian officials said donations stopped and the orphanage closed.

The court has approved 150 claims under the lawsuit; 20 more are pending. In 2014, the same defendants paid $12 million to settle similar claims by 24 other victims, the newspaper reported.

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