

HOW WE RESPOND TO REPORTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

All reports are taken by our Victims Assistance Coordinator (VAC)

- VAC will file a report with CWS (CPS) or local law enforcement in accord with Mandated Reporter Laws.
- VAC explores how to assist victim toward greater well-being.
This can include counseling sessions toward enhanced mental health, a meeting with the bishop and financial compensation when appropriate.
- VAC forwards all reports to Chancery Office
 - Chancery office reports to law enforcement all cases where the accused is alive and there is any sense of credibility to the accusation
 - Independent Diocesan Review Board engages a professional investigator to investigate the accusation and presents a report.
 - Diocesan Review Board makes a finding of fact as to whether the allegation is correct and makes a recommendation as to whether the accused should be barred from ministry in the Church.

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Priests, educators and staff members in the Catholic Diocese of San Diego have no higher responsibility than to protect the children and young people entrusted to their care. That's why, starting in 2003, the Diocese and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a series of reforms to prevent the abuse of children and young people.

Under these rules:

- The diocese practices a policy of "Zero Tolerance." Any priest credibly accused of abusing a minor will be reported to law enforcement and immediately removed from ministry. In addition, his faculties will be revoked and he will not be able to publicly function as a priest in San Diego or any other diocese.
- Similar policies apply to any teacher, staff member or volunteer. No one with a credible accusation of abusing a minor will be employed by the Diocese.
- All clergy, religious women and staff and volunteers dealing with children and young people are:
 - Required to go through Safe Environment training and to renew their training every 5 years.
 - Subject to background check that includes continuously updated federal, state and local criminal databases.

- All children attending Catholic schools or receiving religious education classes receive age-appropriate “Safe Environment” training every year to help children protect themselves and to encourage them to report inappropriate behavior by their peers and adults.
- Every year, Over 50,000 students are put through Safe Environment training, as well as over 3,000 clergy, religious women, teachers, staff and volunteers.
- Every year, the diocese must submit a report on how it is complying with the Charter and norms and every three years, the diocese undergoes an on-site audit by an independent auditor.
- The diocese has been in compliance since its very first audit in 2005 and passed its most recent on-site audit last year in 2017.

As part of these reforms, the diocese also created an Independent Review Board to evaluate allegations of abuse and to recommend to the Bishop disciplinary action. The board includes a members of law enforcement, mental health, judiciary, a pastor and a social worker. One of the board members is a survivor of clergy sexual abuse.

Even as these measures are strictly implemented, the diocese’s leadership never forgets the terrible wounds the victims of past abuse suffered, as well as their families and parishes. They are doing everything in their power to heal those wounds and to ensure such abuse never happens again.

VETTING OF CLERGY

Seminarians: All seminarians are required to comply with the safe environment requirement for adults. In addition, part of their formation includes a battery of psychological testing which is reviewed by a board that includes lay experts.

Visiting priests and deacons: All priests and deacons who visit or come to minister from outside the diocese must present in advance a *Statement of Suitability* issued by their bishop or superior indicating that:

- The priest or deacon is a person of good moral character and reputation.
- They know of nothing which would in any way limit or disqualify the priest or deacon from this ministry.
- They are unaware of anything in his background which would render the priest or deacon unsuitable to work with minor children.

**TO REPORT CASES OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY CHURCH MINISTERS
CONTACT THE DIOCESAN VICTIMS ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR AT
858-490-8353**