



ARCHDIOCESE
of MILWAUKEE

April 20, 2022

RESPONSE TO CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS

Actions Taken, Commitments Made, Promises Kept

INTRODUCTION

Keeping minors (and those who are equivalent to minors or otherwise vulnerable individuals) safe, responding to abuse survivors and holding perpetrators accountable are priorities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. We want to ensure no one suffers from abuse again and no past abuse is covered up. We understand that the failures of some Church leaders have broken trust. In response to the tragedy of clergy sexual abuse of minors, this report is to help Catholics understand what action is being taken to protect minors and respond to those who have been harmed.

RESPONSE

REPORTING ABUSE

If you or someone you know is being abused or you suspect abuse is occurring, contact your local law enforcement department immediately. Any instance of abuse involving a person currently under 18 years of age (minor) should be reported immediately to the civil authorities. If you or someone you know was abused as a minor by clergy or church personnel, call your local police, sheriff or district attorney's office to file a criminal report. You can locate offices for civil authorities in the 10 counties of the archdiocese and review Wisconsin mandatory reporting responsibilities at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/reportabuse>

Reports can also be made to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Stephanie Delmore, MA, LPC, who is available to support abuse survivors. A formal complaint of abuse can be made to the archdiocese by calling the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 414-758-2232. An alternative way to make a formal report for those not wanting to contact the archdiocese is available to you 24 hours a day/7 days a week through the Healing Center at Aurora Health Care <https://www.aurorahealthcare.org/healingadvocacy-services> or at 1-414-219-5555.

HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS

Any allegation of abuse of a minor made against a priest or deacon is immediately reported to civil authorities if the accused is still alive. If law enforcement is unable to pursue criminal charges, the archdiocese hires an investigator to conduct an independent investigation. Investigators are usually retired police department detectives. During an investigation, the priest or deacon is fully restricted from ministry. The detective's report and conclusion are given to the Diocesan Review Board for review and deliberation. Using a standard of preponderance of evidence, i.e., "more likely than not" to have happened, the Review Board makes its recommendation to the archbishop regarding whether the allegation should be considered substantiated and if the accused is suitable for ministry. The archbishop has made the commitment to follow the Review Board's recommendation. If the board recommends substantiation, the priest or deacon remains fully restricted from ministry. Then the case is referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith at the Vatican for determination of what canon law processes are to be undertaken. If proven guilty through the canonical process, the priest/deacon is permanently removed from ministry and his name is added to the list of offenders on the archdiocesan website.

OUTREACH TO ABUSE SURVIVORS

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee's outreach to abuse survivors and their families is coordinated through the Victim Assistance Coordinator. The Victim Assistance Coordinator is Stephanie Delmore, MA, LPC, who can be reached at 414-758-2232. She will assist in the filing of an intake report about the abuse. Other services she will provide include referrals to area therapists trained in working with those who have suffered abuse, as well as assistance to family members of abuse survivors.

SUPPORTING ABUSE SURVIVORS

Believing, supporting and caring for individuals who have suffered sexual abuse by clergy is an important pastoral concern for the Church. When an individual contacts the Victim Assistance Coordinator, a variety of resources are offered, including counseling referrals, spiritual direction and therapy support.

MEETING WITH ABUSE SURVIVORS

Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI invites any individual suffering from sexual abuse of a minor by clergy or is the family member of an abuse survivor, to meet with him personally and share their story, if they desire.

ACCOUNTABILITY

ZERO TOLERANCE

No priest or deacon with a substantiated claim of sexual abuse of a minor can or will ever serve as a priest or deacon in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee or be allowed to minister in another diocese.

PRIEST OFFENDERS

A list of priests of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor is available on the archdiocesan website. The list includes the individual's name, photograph, dates and locations of service and documents related to their abuse. The list of priest offenders was first published in July 2004, was expanded from 2011-2013 and is updated with any new information when available. <https://www.archmil.org/clergy-abuse-response/restricted-priests.htm>

DIOCESAN REVIEW BOARD

The Diocesan Review Board reviews and assesses allegations of sexual abuse of minors after a decision by civil authorities is complete. The Board examines and discusses investigative reports on an allegation and makes recommendations regarding suitability for ministry of an accused priest or deacon or other church figure based upon the standard of preponderance of evidence, i.e., “more likely than not” to have happened. The Board reviews and approves diocesan policies for responding to allegations of sexual abuse by clergy or other church figures. It also reviews compliance with the commitments made in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which was adopted by the United States’ Bishops at their 2002 meeting in Dallas (and is often referred to as the Dallas Charter).

COMMUNICATION

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor involves a priest or deacon in active ministry, the priest or deacon is required to step away from his ministry assignment during the process and is restricted from any public ministry. If the priest or deacon is currently assigned to a parish or school, the parish and / or school community is informed that an allegation has been made. Anyone with information is asked to contact civil authorities. Media is also informed. Updates are provided to the parish/school community throughout the process, until a final resolution is reached. All individuals involved in the investigation process are expected to cooperate and communicate with the law enforcement agency. Every effort is made to ensure the public or the accused do not interfere with any open criminal investigation.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF BISHOPS

Pope Francis issued a news set of standards and procedures, *Vox estis lux mundi*, to ensure the accountability of bishops. The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service has been created to gather and relay reports of sexual misconduct involving bishops of the United States, and reports of their intentional interference in a sexual abuse investigation. Reports may be made at <https://reportbishopabuse.org/> or by calling 1-800-276-1562.

RELIGIOUS ORDER PRIESTS

Although religious orders function separately from the archbishop, the same rules and policies apply. No religious order priest or deacon with a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor can serve as a priest or deacon in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Religious Order Superiors must attest to the suitability for ministry of any of its members serving in or traveling to the archdiocese.

PREVENTION

SAFE ENVIRONMENT CERTIFICATION

All priests, deacons, bishops, parish and school personnel, and anyone volunteering with minors must meet all of the following requirements to be Safe Environment Certified:

- Receive training in recognizing and reporting child abuse.
- Undergo a criminal background check prior to beginning service and every subsequent 5 years.
- Review, sign and abide by the Code of Ethical Standards.
- Review, sign and abide by the Social Media and Digital Communications Policy
- Review and understand the Mandatory Reporting Requirements in the State of Wisconsin.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has a centralized electronic record keeping system for safe environment certification and has a process in place for revoking or suspending safe environment certification for behavior that puts the health, safety, or well-being of minors at risk.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION

The archdiocese runs approximately 175 Safeguarding All God's Children (Safe Environment Education) training sessions each year. Since 2002, more than 90,000 adults have been trained. More than 50,000 children participate in age-appropriate training in our Catholic schools and religious education programs each year.

Every Church and school employee, including priests, deacons, bishops, employees at the archdiocesan offices, parish staff and Catholic school faculty and staff – is required to complete Safe Environment Education. Every volunteer who has contact with minors must also complete Safe Environment Education prior to their service. Beginning in 2021, all those with Safe Environment Certification must complete a continuing education course every 5 years in order to maintain their certification.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

A criminal background check is conducted on every archdiocesan priest, bishop and deacon prior to ordination and then every subsequent five years. Criminal background checks include a search of national and state criminal databases, as well as sex offender registries. A criminal background check was most recently conducted in 2019 on every archdiocesan priest, bishop and deacon. Religious order priests serving in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee are also subject to criminal background checks prior to their serving in the archdiocese, as attested to by their superiors. All volunteers working with minors and anyone that is a parish or school employee also receive a criminal background check as part of the archdiocesan Safe Environment Program prior to beginning employment or volunteering and then every subsequent five years.

CODE OF ETHICAL STANDARDS

The Code of Ethical Standards for Church Personnel was adopted in 1994 and has been updated and revised eight times, most recently in 2010. It is currently under review again to conform to changes in canon law. All priests, deacons, and bishops must read, sign and abide by the Code of Ethical Standards. In addition, every Church and School employee and volunteer who has contact with minors is required to read, sign and abide by the Code.

FORMING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

All students in Catholic programs, including Catholic schools and religious education programs, receive age-appropriate education in recognizing, resisting and reporting sexual abuse. In July 2020, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee began providing the Circle of Grace curriculum created by the Archdiocese of Omaha as the approved curriculum for use in our parishes and schools.

INVOLVEMENT OF LAY PEOPLE

The majority of the members of the Diocesan Review Board are lay men and women. This Board is charged with overseeing investigations of sexual abuse of minors and those who are equivalent to minors by clergy and other church leaders and making recommendations to the archbishop about fitness for ministry. They are also responsible for reviewing and recommending policies for handling sexual abuse of minors by clergy and other church figures. Lay men and women also serve on the Archdiocesan Community Advisory Board which reviews and recommends initiatives in response to clergy sexual abuse of minors. Members of this board include victim advocates, professional psychologists and therapists who work with abuse survivors, law enforcement, parents and Catholic professionals. In addition, a lay woman serves on the archdiocesan Priest Placement Board, which coordinates and recommends the ministry assignments of priests and parish directors.

SEMINARY FORMATION

Formation of seminarians in healthy sexuality is part of the priestly formation program at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary. Before a man can even apply to the seminary, an extensive and rigorous two-tiered screening process is conducted. Once a man applies for admission to the seminary program, the process continues with background and reference checks, psychological testing, review by an admissions board (which includes lay men and women). Once accepted, the seminarian participates in a formation program which includes formation each year in chastity, celibacy, maturity, human sexuality and other related human formation topics. There are regular meetings with spiritual directors, monitoring of social media and internet usage, and annual formation evaluations. In addition, all seminarians are required to attend Safe Environment Education Training and review and sign the Code of Ethical Standards at the beginning of their formation.

FORMING PERMANENT DEACONS

Diaconate Formation helps to form a strong awareness and accountability for the protection of God's Family. An inquirer, before admission to the Aspirant Path must undergo a comprehensive admission process which includes the following: a criminal background check; psychological testing, letters of reference and Safe Environment education, which includes reviewing and signing the Code of Ethical Standards . In addition, married men undergo further testing and interviews with their wives. Once admitted to the Aspirant Path, men receive additional training in the dignity of the human person – catholic social teachings, healthy boundaries, and restorative justice. If selected for admission to the Candidate Path, there is additional training in moral theology and multi-cultural counseling. Before a candidate is accepted to be ordained, a Criminal background check is performed again and more trainings for clergy through CMG connect are done. Single men make a Promise of Celibacy.

TRANSPARENCY

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENTS

The first Accountability Statement in response to this crisis was released September 12, 2002. This report was issued annually to parishioners through 2015. In ensuing years, information was kept updated on the archdiocesan website.

ANNUAL REPORTING

Every year each parish/school is required to complete annual Safe Environment documentation that is compiled into a Charter Compliance report for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. The annual archdiocesan Charter Compliance Report is sent to StoneBridge Business Partners for review on behalf of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection USCCB. The USCCB compiles each diocese and eparchy's report into an annual report for all dioceses and eparchies in the United States. This Annual Report is available at <https://www.usccb.org/offices/child-and-youth-protection/audits>. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has been found compliant each year since the USCCB Charter Audit process began in 2004.