

RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ABUSE ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE FAITHFUL OF SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

Introduction

Resolving the past sexual abuse of minors by clergy and detection, prevention, and deterring of future abuse will continue to be a priority matter for the Archdiocese. This is also a moment for renewal within our Church. It is a time to rebuild trust in the integrity of the vast majority of clergy and pastoral ministers who have dedicated their lives in service to the Lord and to his Church. Sexual abuse is a crime for which justice is demanded. It is a grave sin, which must be confronted and must not be tolerated. Many people are rightfully angry, hurt, frustrated, upset, and saddened by what has occurred. For Catholics of southeastern Wisconsin, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will hold itself accountable publicly, financially and spiritually. These principles guide our future actions.

Sacred Trust

There is a sacred relationship that exists between the Church and its members, be they adult or child. Sexual abuse by clergy and pastoral ministers victimizes the innocent and violates that relationship. The Archdiocese's intentions are to support victims and punish perpetrators, while preventing future abuse from happening. In keeping with the basic value of the Church's care for the poor and vulnerable, we are especially concerned about the protection of our children. The comprehensive approach taken by the Archdiocese calls for an organized response so that victims begin to heal, perpetrators will be held accountable, and the personal safety of every child will be assured.

Supporting Victims

Believing, supporting and caring for victims/survivors of sexual abuse is our primary concern. The Archdiocese will communicate information about past, current, and future perpetrators of sexual abuse, so any victims/survivors may begin to heal and feel safe coming forward to report sexual abuse.

The Archdiocese provides counseling referrals and pays for therapy for the victim and/or their family regardless of when the sexual abuse occurred.

Policy for Reporting Abuse

When a report of sexual abuse is received and the perpetrator is still alive, the report is referred to the district attorney and/or law enforcement, regardless of when the offense occurred. The Archdiocese fully cooperates with civil authorities conducting investigations.

Getting Support

Sexual abuse of a minor will be immediately reported to the district attorney and/or law enforcement. In an effort to support victims of sexual abuse, the Archdiocese established the following services:

Dr. Barbara Reinke, director of the archdiocesan office for response to sexual abuse (Project Benjamin), at 414-769-3436; or to Dr. Anna Campbell, a licensed psychologist in private practice who works outside the Church structure, at 414-476-2699.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires that all clergy and Church personnel report suspected or actual sexual abuse involving minors to the proper law enforcement and Church authorities. This policy is part of the Clergy Manual provided to all clergy and also part of the Code of Ethical Standards for Church Leaders in place since 1994.

Community Programs

We understand some victims may prefer to seek supportive services outside the Church. The following community programs provide free services to sexual abuse survivors.

Dodge County

People Against a Violence Environment920-837-3785 or 1-800-775-3785

Fond du Lac County

ASTOP.....920-921-7657

Kenosha County

Pathways of Courage.....262-656-3500 or 1-800-594-5272

Milwaukee County

The Healing Center414-454-6588 or 1-877-727-7577
 Sexual Assault Treatment Center414-210-5555
 The Counseling Center.....414-281-9523

Ozaukee County

Advocates of Ozaukee County262-375-4034

Racine County

Sexual Assault Services262-637-7233

Sheboygan County

Safe Harbor920-452-7640

Walworth County

Association for the Prevention of Family Violence262-723-4653

Washington County

Friends of Abused Families262-334-7298

Waukesha County

Women's Center262-542-3828 or 1-888-542-3828

Statewide Sexual Abuse Information

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault608-257-1516
 Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP)414-299-9608

Investigations

For reports of sexual abuse that have been sent to the district attorney and returned to the Archdiocese for any reason, the Archdiocese will commission an independent investigation if no previously substantiated allegations exist against that individual. In those cases, where the cleric has a current ministry assignment, the Archdiocese will:

- Remove the cleric from any ministry assignment until the investigation and judgment have been completed.
- Refer the allegation to an outside, independent investigator for judgment.
- Permanently remove from ministry or pastoral office, any cleric judged to have sexually abused a minor, with disclosure of the reason for his removal.

Judgment of the credibility of allegations will be made by qualified individuals not employed by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Attorney John Fiorenza, a retired judge, has agreed to serve as the independent investigator for such cases. This process has been recommended and endorsed by the Special Commission reviewing sexual abuse policies of the Archdiocese.

Accountability for Perpetrators

Any priest, deacon or pastoral minister judged by civil authorities or the independent investigator to have sexually abused a minor will not be allowed to serve in any ministerial capacity or hold any pastoral office. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is fully implementing the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002.

Priests who are Members of Religious Communities

The Archdiocese requires the following from religious communities:

- A copy of the religious community's policy on response to sexual abuse must be filed with the Archdiocese before any of its members can minister within the Archdiocese
- The superior of each religious congregation must provide the Archdiocese with written documentation that no credible allegations exist against any individual seeking to minister within the Archdiocese.
- If the Archdiocese receives a report of allegations of abuse by order priests or religious, the Archdiocese will immediately report the incident to the district attorney and/or law enforcement.

Background Checks

It is the policy of the Archdiocese that all Church personnel must undergo criminal background checks as part of their employment at a parish or school or in any specialized ministry of the Archdiocese.

Background checks are also required for all students in degree or certificate programs at Saint Francis Seminary. For men studying for the priesthood or diaconate, in-depth personal interviews are conducted and extensive background checks, fingerprint and federal and state criminal background checks, and psychological testing are required.

Financial Reporting and Accountability

The membership of the Archdiocesan Finance Council includes seven business and community leaders with financial expertise, and two pastors. The Finance Council reviews and approves the annual Archdiocesan operating budget and reviews the annual Archdiocesan financial statements. In the future:

- The Finance Council will review information about out-of-court settlements, especially those involving claims of sexual abuse of minors, on an annual basis as part of the financial accountability.
- The Finance Council will review any extraordinary, non-budgeted expenses related to out-of-court settlements, as well as all settlement claims involving the Archbishop of Milwaukee or any bishop.
- The Archdiocese of Milwaukee's annual operating budget will be posted on the Archdiocesan Web site.
- An annual report will be published and distributed to parishes and parishioners of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Catholic Stewardship Appeal

Gifts to the Catholic Stewardship Appeal have not and will not be used for legal settlements. Rather, contributions are used to meet the educational, spiritual and social justice needs of individuals, families, parishes and schools. The annual Catholic Stewardship Appeal funds pastoral ministries that touch the lives of nearly 700,000 Catholics who are the Church in southeastern Wisconsin.

More Information

Additional information about Archdiocesan policies and procedures, the Archdiocesan Finance Council, financial information and much more, is available on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Web site www.archmil.org.

Conclusion

This is a trying time for the Church. There is a profound feeling of sadness accompanied by a feeling of betrayal of trust. Together, we can ensure that such trust is restored and that the Church is strengthened through our faith and actions.

Please continue to pray for healing for all those who have suffered because of this crisis and continue to keep the Church of southeastern Wisconsin in your prayers.