

The Diocese of Owensboro has had a policy dealing with the issue of sexual abuse since 1985. The current policy incorporates Church laws set out for the U.S. Catholic Church in 2002 and revised as recently as 2011. It also reflects recommendations from outside auditors whose knowledge assists the diocese in creating strong, effective policy.

As required by Kentucky law, anyone who obtains information of known or suspected abuse of a current minor must report it immediately to local law enforcement or child protective services. The only exception is that which is under the seal of the Sacramental Confession.

In addition to civil reporting, if an accused person is/was anyone acting in the name of the Church (priest, deacon, employee, or volunteer), a report should also be made to the diocese, using the confidential phone line reserved for the diocesan Pastoral Assistance Coordinator.

The Pastoral Assistance Coordinator is the first diocesan contact for allegations of abuse, either past or present, against anyone acting in the name of the Church. If another Church representative is presented directly with a report, that individual must communicate the information promptly to the Pastoral Assistance Coordinator.

The Pastoral Assistance Coordinator is trained and prepared to seek necessary information from the reporting source, ensure that civil authorities have been contacted regarding the allegation, and establish rapport with any alleged victim. His/her role includes assisting the alleged victim

and his/her family throughout the investigative process and obtaining counseling and spiritual care, as determined.

The diocese has a Review Board, which acts as a consultative body from whom the bishop seeks counsel whenever allegations arise of sexual abuse against anyone acting in the name of the Church. The bishop is not a member of the Review Board, but he or his Liaison attends Review Board meetings as needed.



Each reported allegation is to be initially evaluated by the bishop and in consultation with the Review Board chairperson, the Bishop's Liaison, and/or other individuals with relevant expertise.

If the initial evaluation is deemed credible, that is, has a semblance of truth, a preliminary investigation will be opened. During such an investigation the accused will be prevented from functioning in Church ministry/employment, unless requested otherwise by law enforcement officials.

Any preliminary investigation will be overseen by the Review Board, taking care not to interfere with any criminal investigation. At the

conclusion of its preliminary investigation, the Review Board will make a recommendation to the bishop. The bishop will notify both the accused and the alleged victim of the outcome and continue to offer pastoral assistance, as appropriate.

If an allegation is substantiated, that is, the accused admits to, does not contest, or is found guilty by a civil court of law or an investigative process, the accused shall be terminated immediately from employment and any position of ministry within the diocese.

If an allegation is substantiated in the case of a cleric, the bishop will also follow Church laws that require relieving the accused of all ministerial duties as a precautionary measure and communicating the allegation and findings to the Congregation of Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican. If the case is substantiated at that level, the offender will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, perhaps even being dismissed from the clerical state, if the case so warrants.

If an allegation is proven false, every reasonable effort will be made to help restore the reputation of the falsely accused. An individual who makes an abuse report in good faith is protected from liability under Kentucky law; however, anyone falsely accused has the right to seek justice for the crime of false denunciation or calumny (defamation).

If an allegation is unsubstantiated, that is, not proven true, the bishop will communicate the investigation's outcome and continue to offer pastoral assistance, as appropriate.

No person, once ordained as a bishop, priest, or deacon, against whom even a single allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been substantiated to a degree of moral certitude, will be permitted to return to public ministry, according to Church law.

A cleric from another diocese or religious order who wishes to serve in this diocese for a period of time or for a special event (baptism, wedding, parish mission, etc.) must have his/her superior/organization present a letter to the Office of the Bishop, indicating fitness for ministry and indicating that this person is not known to have abused any minor.

The diocese requires background checks for all priests, deacons, seminarians, and employees, and for all volunteers wishing to work with children and youth of the diocese. These individuals are also required to accept a code of conduct relating to their dealings with minors and accept and acknowledge the diocesan sexual abuse policy.

As required by laws of the Church, the diocese must provide appropriate education about sexual abuse to all clerics, employees, volunteers, youth, and their parents. The diocese is committed to educating people about this crime and assisting people so they may find safety and healing.

No one should be left alone in a supervisory capacity with minors. There should always be a minimum of two Safe Environment-cleared adults for all Church-related events with minors even if a teen under the age of 18 is assisting.

The "Diocese of Owensboro Policy Requirements Governing Diocesan, Parish, and School Ministries Involving Minors and Vulnerable Individuals" presents acceptable protocols for ministering with minors for the diocese.

**To report suspected abuse, call:
Kentucky Child Protection Hotline
(toll-free) at:
270-KYSAFE1 (270-597-2331)**

**To contact the
Pastoral Assistance
Coordinator for diocesan
reporting or further assistance,
call:
270-852-8380**



Diocese of Owensboro
Catholic Pastoral Center
600 Locust Street
Owensboro, KY 42301
(www.rcdok.org/safe)

Summary of the "Revised Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures"

Revised July 2014

Diocese of Owensboro



This summary is meant to assist the faithful of the Diocese of Owensboro. It does not present the entire diocesan sexual abuse policy. Copies of the complete policy are available from any parish, diocesan institution, the Catholic Pastoral Center, or online at www.rcdok.org/safe.