

To lead these investigations the Archdiocese hired veteran child abuse prosecutor Gina Maisto Smith, who assembled a multidisciplinary team of experts. All cases of the priests on leave were referred to the appropriate local district attorney prior to investigation by the multidisciplinary team. The multidisciplinary team, which reports to Smith, is composed of seven local and national authorities in the area of child sexual abuse, including a forensic psychiatrist, a psychologist who specializes in evaluating and treating sexual offenders, a pediatrician who leads the Child Protection Program at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, two former Philadelphia detectives from the Special Victims Unit, and two former Philadelphia assistant district attorneys.

To date, the multidisciplinary team has located, gathered and reviewed more than 400,000 pages of relevant documents, identified, located and interviewed 227 witnesses, across the United States and in several foreign countries, and conducted countless site visits to parishes and schools where incidents were alleged to have occurred. Many cases involved a search for additional evidence including yearbooks, parish records, photographs and public documents. Some cases dated as far back in time as 40 years, which posed significant investigative challenges.

Mrs. Smith said, "We took care to develop a process that is thorough, impartial and fair. We recognize that allegations of child sexual abuse can be incendiary in nature. The stakes are high for both the accused and the accuser. Moreover, most child sexual abuse cases turn on credibility the evaluation of word against word. Accordingly, the process must be painstakingly detailed. Its integrity is demonstrated by an exhaustive search for corroboration - a synthesis of witness interviews, documents and any additional available evidence, all of which must be analyzed in light of the expertise of the multidisciplinary team."

When the multidisciplinary team forwarded its completed investigations to the Archbishop, he asked the Archdiocesan Review Board to also review the cases and to provide him with a recommendation. In the past year the Review Board added nine new members, some of whom were appointed by Archbishop Chaput and some by Cardinal Justin Rigali. New Review Board members include a professor of forensic psychiatry, a former chief in the child abuse unit of the Philadelphia District Attorney's office and a member of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Sexual Offender Assessment Board.

Not all of the administrative leave cases were announced today. Of those 26 men removed from active ministry last year six of the 26 cases are being held by law enforcement for further review. In addition, two more of the 26 cases were recently released by law enforcement and are currently under investigation by the multidisciplinary team.

Of the remaining nine cases, all investigations are complete and are pending examination by the Review Board or a final decision by Archbishop Chaput. Due to the ongoing process there is no indication as to when the resolutions of the remaining cases will be made, however the Archdiocese hopes to announce them as soon as possible.

"I've been in Philadelphia for less than a year, and I've tried as quickly as possible to understand all of the many issues facing our local Church," said Archbishop Chaput. "During that time, dealing with sexual abuse and protecting children has been—and will remain—a top priority for me and for this Archdiocese. Our actions, including these outcomes and the steps we have taken to improve our policies and procedures, show that we have learned from the past. No lesson from the sexual abuse scandal is more important