



Diocese of Cheyenne

Office of the Bishop

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Diocese of Cheyenne Reports Third Credible Wyoming Child Abuse Allegation Against Retired Bishop Hart

The Diocese of Cheyenne is providing this announcement in accord with its obligations under the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* that calls for dioceses to be “open and transparent in communicating with the public about the sexual abuse of minors by clergy” (Article 7) and under the diocese’s own norms which specifies that “a public announcement will be made to the diocese as a whole and to the general public” after an “accusation has been investigated and determined to be credible” (Article XI).

On July 2, 2018, the Diocese of Cheyenne announced that it had conducted a canonical investigation and concluded that there was “credible and substantiated” evidence that retired Bishop Joseph Hart had abused two Wyoming boys. Following this announcement, a third individual reported that he, too, was sexually abused by Bishop Hart in 1980. The diocese reported the allegation to the Cheyenne Police Department and is cooperating with their investigation.

As required by Church law, the diocese conducted a canonical investigation which included notifying Bishop Hart and asking him for an interview to respond to the accusation. He declined to be interviewed. In accord with diocesan norms, the results of the investigation were given to the *Diocesan Review Board*, comprised of three men and four women. They are a seasoned group of professionals including parents, therapists, a psychologist, an educational administrator, the chancellor and a priest. The review board found the allegation credible and substantiated. Consequently, the diocese has forwarded the ‘Initial Investigation’ to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for its action.

Bishop Steven Biegler asks for prayers of healing for all who are impacted by sexual abuse. He said, “I commend the victim for having the courage to contact us. If anyone has been abused, no matter how long ago, I encourage you to come forward. I want to listen to you and accompany you on a journey of healing. Recently, Pope Francis said of the sex abuse scandal, ‘*We abandoned the little ones.*’ As we move forward, we must heed the call of the Lord Jesus to be guardians of the least.”

If anyone has suffered sexual abuse, contact your local law enforcement agency or the Department of Family Services. Upon notification of authorities or if you have questions, please contact the Chancellor Patti Loehrer at 307-638-1530 or the Diocesan Victim Advocate, Deacon Rollie Raboin at 307-532-4586.