

# Recommendations from the 2009 Audit Period

## **I. SAFE ENVIRONMENT RECORD KEEPING**

Safe environment record keeping is a critical piece of the audit process. Accurate, verifiable records are the only way to prove to the faithful that bishops take the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* seriously. While dioceses/eparchies are cutting back due to economic times, personnel cuts in this area should be looked at very carefully. It is too easy to become complacent about creating safe environments and to assume that everyone is doing what is required of them.

Ideally dioceses/eparchies should have a *Charter* point-person to ensure that all areas of the *Charter* are fully implemented. There needs to be in place a record-keeping system that can accurately and in a timely fashion track clergy, employees, and volunteers in order to determine who has and has not been trained, and whose background has and has not been evaluated. It is only through adequate, careful record keeping that parishes can be assured that their parish or school is a safe place for children to attend.

## **2. PARISH AUDITS**

Parish audits are important to the full implementation of the *Charter*. The Gavin Group, Inc., offers each diocese/eparchy the opportunity to undergo parish audits as part of the on-site audit. Undergoing external parish audits helps the bishop determine not only how well parishes are implementing the *Charter*, but also how well diocesan policies and procedures are being implemented on the parish level. In all but the most unusual circumstances, parish audits do not affect the compliance of the diocese. If for some reason outside parish audits are not conducted, the dioceses/eparchies should consider conducting internal parish audits.

## **3. AVAILABILITY OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT MATERIALS**

Safe environment materials need to be readily available in parishes. The easy availability of these materials sends the message that the parishes take seriously their role in creating safe environments and makes important information available to those who need it. Policies and procedures mean little if they are not in the hands of the people who must know them. Following this recommendation can be as simple as asking parishes to include the contact number of the victim assistance coordinator on the front cover of Sunday bulletins or to place brochures outlining requirements in church vestibules.

## **4. REGULAR MEETINGS BETWEEN BISHOPS AND MAJOR SUPERIORS OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS/CONGREGATIONS**

Having regular meetings between bishops and major superiors of religious orders/congregations is key to ensure open, clear communication between them concerning the issues of allegations that may be made, or have been made, against a cleric member of a religious institute ministering in the diocese or eparchy. With changes in major superiors being made on a regular basis, and with the numerous changes in bishops, it is important to have a minimum of one scheduled meeting within every audit period to review the protocol to be followed if an allegation is made. Waiting until there is an allegation against a cleric member of a religious institute to set ground rules and protocols can lead to misunderstandings and confusion.

## **5. INTERNATIONAL PRIESTS**

As bishops accept international priests into their dioceses, it is clear that they are facing many challenges when it comes to due diligence. Cultural orientations and evaluation of any risk factors for sexual abuse prior to accepting a priest from a foreign country are recommended.