



AN UPDATE ON THE STATUS
OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
IN THE DIOCESE OF YOUNGSTOWN

“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matt. 8.1)

February 12, 2004

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Dear Friends in Christ:

For the last two years the Catholic Church has anguished over the revelation of past incidents of sexual abuse of minors. This has been an exceedingly painful experience, first of all for victims and their families, but for many other members of the Church as well.

While the situation in the Diocese of Youngstown is not as severe as it is in some other places, we too have had some accusations of past incidents of sexual abuse, and we know that even a single incident would be too many! Once again, therefore, as I have in the past, I wish to express our sincere regrets and apologies to any member of the Church who has been harmed by the actions or decisions of a priest or bishop, or any other member of the Church. And with the hope of assisting in the process of reconciliation, I continue to be willing to meet with any individual or family who has suffered from past incidents of sexual abuse.

The information contained in this update is part of an ongoing effort to keep you informed about the situation in the Diocese of Youngstown, to remind you of our response, and to ensure you that the Church in this Diocese will do everything possible to provide a safe environment for its ministry to children and young people.

Let us pray for forgiveness and the healing of past wounds; let us recognize all the good the Church has done and continues to do; and let us resolve to move into the future with hearts purified and renewed, strengthened in our commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church to the very best of our abilities.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Youngstown

Introduction

The Diocese of Youngstown is blessed with many good and faithful priests serving the Church. To these men we say “thank you” for their dedication to their ministries every day.

Nonetheless, we are also painfully aware of the national situation regarding sexual abuse of children. It has been, and continues to be, the commitment of the Diocese of Youngstown to educate members of our diocesan Church about the evil and consequences of abuse of children and young people, to provide safe environments for them, to provide effective response to allegations of abuse, and to provide pastoral outreach to victims and their families.

As a diocese, and as people of God, we continually strive to protect “*the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*” By our actions and by our words, we promise to do everything possible to follow the example of Jesus who welcomed children, and to bring His healing and caring presence to all victims of child abuse.

Child Protection Policy

The first policy for the protection of children in our diocese was created in 1994 and revised in 1999. The current *Child Protection Policy* was promulgated in March, 2003.

The diocesan policy is in complete compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The *Child Protection Policy* has been, and continues to be, distributed to all employees and volunteers in service in any parish, school or institution of the diocese, and to any interested person. Additionally, a *Summary of Key Points* has been published in a brochure format and widely distributed. Copies of these documents are available from the Chancery Office or on the diocesan website, www.doy.org.

Education & Implementation

The parishes, schools and institutions of the Diocese of Youngstown cooperate fully with implementation of the *Child Protection Policy*. All employees and volunteers receive a copy of the policy and commit to its provisions by signing a background questionnaire and applicant's certification.

Employees and volunteers receive in-service training through a variety of resources and meetings. Those who work regularly with children are also fingerprinted. By these means, the Diocese of Youngstown strives to make all who work or volunteer in any form of ministry or service aware of the provisions of our policy, and provides opportunities for education in identifying and reporting abuse or suspected abuse.

Administrators receive helpful information and guidance for implementation of diocesan procedures. Any parish, school or group may request a meeting with the assistance coordinator or other diocesan representative.

The policy was printed in its entirety in the [Catholic Exponent](#), and has its own link on the diocesan website, www.doy.org, making it available to a wide audience.

A special day-long clergy workshop held in June, 2002, and discussions at various meetings including the Fall 2002 Clergy Convocation addressed the topic.

The dedication and commitment of pastors, principals, teachers, catechists and all who minister to children of the diocese is evident by their diligence in assuring that all who minister in the diocese abide by the provisions of the *Child Protection Policy*.

Community Relationships

The diocese has a good working relationship with the public Children's Services agencies in the six counties of the diocese. The bishop continues to meet with the directors of these agencies in order to determine how the diocese and the agencies can mutually help each other to protect children.

These agencies have provided the diocese with their statistics on reported allegations of child sexual abuse. In the last 10 years, over 12,400 allegations were received by these agencies. To the best of our knowledge not one of these allegations involved a priest of this diocese. The numbers were helpful in comparing the total number of allegations with the allegations made against priests, and indicate that sexual abuse is a serious problem in society as a whole.

The diocese has cooperated fully with prosecutors in each of our six counties, providing, at our initiative, information relative to all past cases of child sexual abuse.

Diocesan Review Board

As required by the USCCB *Charter and Norms*, a Review Board was established in July, 2002, and held its first meeting on August 27, 2002. The Review Board is a consultative group whose purpose is to advise the bishop on matters relative to the sexual abuse of minors in the Church. Particular tasks include:

- review the diocesan *Child Protection Policy* to ensure that it is consistent with the *Charter and Norms* and the Code of Canon Law;
- assist the diocese with the full and fair implementation of the *Policy and Charter*;
- offer to the bishop recommendations regarding the status of priests who have been accused of incidents of sexual abuse – past, present or future;
- suggest ways in which the diocese can effectively respond to the scandal of sexual abuse; ways in which the Church can be reconciled and healed; ways in which the diocese can appropriately relate to the larger community in this matter.

Agenda items at review board meetings have included: discussion of the current situation, both on the diocesan and national level; review and revision of the *Child Protection Policy*; diocesan response to the scandal of abuse; relating to the community; reconciliation and healing; canonical requirements of the *Norms*; and plans for implementation of the policy. Additionally, the review board heard a presentation of past cases and current litigation in the diocese from diocesan legal counsel.

Members of the Diocesan Review Board are: Det. Sgt. Delphine Baldwin-Casey, Mary Butler, Sr. Nancy Dawson, Atty. Alan Kretzer, Sr. Ann McManamon, Dr. Ronald Mikolich, Msgr. Kenneth Miller, Kristina Murphy, Teresa Peach, Deacon Ronald Reolfi, Fr. Matthew Roehrig, Rev. Mark Williams and Thomas Wrenn. Msgr. John Zuraw, Executive Director of Clergy Services, and Nancy Yuhasz, Chancellor and Assistance Coordinator, are staff resource persons to the board.

Communications

The issue of sexual abuse of children by priests has made headlines in national and local news. In the Diocese of Youngstown, we have provided statistics on numbers of accused priests to the news media. Diocesan news is sent to over 70 media outlets in the six counties of the diocese, including television, radio and print media.

Parishes, schools and institutions of the diocese receive any new information, updates, etc. through a variety of means, including the Catholic Exponent; our monthly newsletter, *Communique*; and by letters and meetings.

A Review of Statistics

There are no priests in active ministry against whom an allegation of sexual abuse has been made.

During a review of clergy personnel files and from reports given to us, it was discovered that over the past 50 years, 19 priests serving in the Diocese of Youngstown had allegations of child sexual abuse made against them. During this 50-year period, 483 diocesan priests, approximately 370 religious order priests, and nine priests of other dioceses have served in the Diocese of Youngstown. These numbers indicate that 2% of the priests who served the diocese were accused of abuse.

We are not aware of any incidents of sexual abuse of children that have occurred in recent years in the Diocese of Youngstown. Of the allegations of past abuse, the most recent occurred 13 years ago. Other claims pre-date that by many years, in some instances as many as 50 years. Given the length of time that has passed, the nature and veracity of some of these allegations cannot be determined.

Of the 19 priests who have had allegations, four are deceased; four left ministry; two left to serve in other dioceses (with full disclosure to the receiving diocese) and are no longer in ministry; seven diocesan and one religious priest are retired; and one allegation was unsubstantiated.

Currently, litigation is pending in three cases. The diocese continues to cooperate with civil authorities and to fund therapy and counseling during pending litigation.

The Diocese of Youngstown, as part of our policy, offers spiritual and/or therapeutic counseling for alleged victims and their families. Between 1950-2003 approximately \$200,000 has been paid for these services; and from 1950-1994 approximately \$300,000 was paid in settlement of claims. These amounts were paid from the diocesan self-insurance fund. Beginning with our 1994 policy it has been diocesan practice not to offer settlements.

Audit & Study

Every diocese in the United States was required to undergo an audit of its child protection program. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops contracted with an independent firm, the Gavin Group, Inc., to conduct the audits. Teams of two auditors spent one

week in each diocese. The results of the audits were released by the USCCB on January 6, 2004.

The audit for the Diocese of Youngstown took place in August, 2003, using a several page audit instrument. The auditors looked closely at our *Child Protection Policy*, reviewed documentation to support the questions of the audit instrument, and interviewed staff members, legal counsel, Review Board members, pastors and others.

We are very pleased to report that the Diocese of Youngstown was found to be in full compliance with the USCCB *Charter* and *Norms*. Additionally, the diocese received three commendations:

- For the implementation of a far-reaching communications initiative reflecting a high degree of openness and transparency.
- For the progressive development of a sexual abuse program in 1994 that included pastoral outreach and required background evaluations of diocesan personnel.
- For the creation of a review board in 1994 and communicating the identity of board members to the public.

The USCCB also commissioned a study by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to try to determine the causes of child sexual abuse. This study required each diocese to complete a survey on each priest who had an allegation made against him, and the victim who made the allegation. The Diocese of Youngstown complied completely with the survey. The national results will be released by the USCCB on February 27, 2004.

The Future

The provisions of the *Child Protection Policy* are an on-going effort to keep our children safe. The policy will be reviewed and revisions made as needed. Education programs will help those involved in ministry to be more aware of policies and procedures.

Healing and reconciliation for victims, their families, and the accused will continue as important steps in restoring trust.

The Diocese of Youngstown will continue to do everything possible to ensure the safety of our children.

Conclusion

The protection of children will continue to be a priority in the days and years to come. Let us all pray for “*the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*,” that they may grow to be loving and faithful members of the Church.