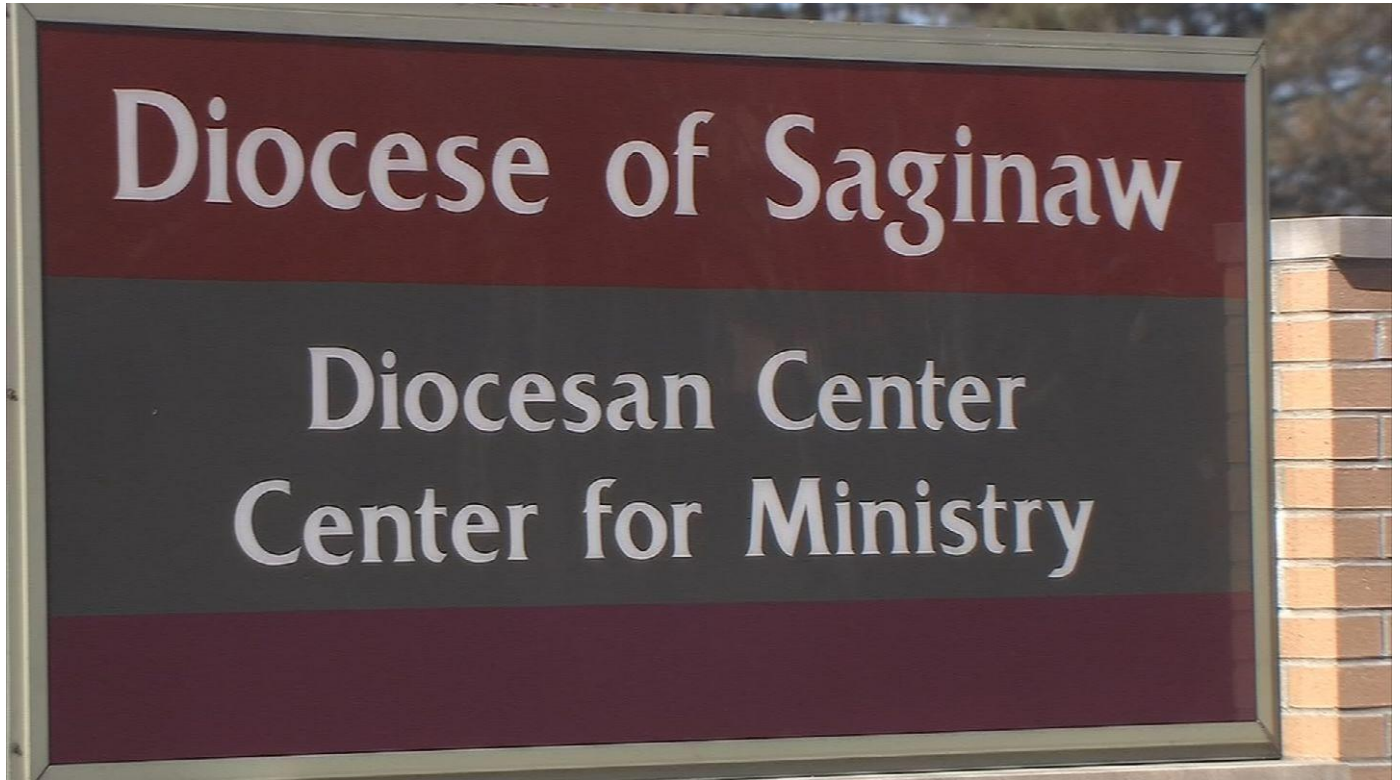


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Diocese issues statement ahead of former priest's parole

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A former priest imprisoned for sex crimes against children is now preparing for parole.

Robert DeLand was sentenced to prison on several charges in 2019 after three young men accused the former priest of sexual assault. DeLand pleaded no contest to second-degree criminal sexual conduct causing personal injury. He also entered a no contest plea to gross indecency between two males, and delivery of an imitation controlled substance.

He was sentenced to two to 15 years in prison.

On Feb. 15, the Diocese of Saginaw issued the following statement:

"We continue to hold in our prayers all victims of sexual assault, especially minors and those who are vulnerable.

On behalf of the Church, we are deeply sorry for wounds that have been inflicted on the faithful and members of the community as a result of this case.

Following the criminal trial against Robert (Fr. Bob) DeLand and in consultation with the independent Diocesan Review Board, Bishop Gruss submitted the case to the Holy See.

Restrictions placed upon Robert DeLand by the Diocese – forbidding him from presenting himself as a priest or exercising public ministry – remain in place permanently.

The Holy See will make a final decision regarding Robert DeLand's priestly status.

DeLand was arrested in 2018 after three men came forward accusing him of sexual assault and other crimes.

"I'm very sorry that the community has gone through all of this, the embarrassment. I'm very, very sorry about that," DeLand said during his sentencing.

The Saginaw County Prosecutor's Office said DeLand wasn't sorry. In April of 2019, the prosecutor released audio tapes from the night of DeLand's arrest in February 2018. That's when investigators say a 17-year-old boy, who wore a wire in DeLand's condo, was assaulted.

"My hand was covering my crotch. He started rubbing my hand on top of my crotch," the boy is heard saying on the tapes.

DeLand is expected to be released in April.

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