



What has the Catholic Church done to effectively respond to sexual abuse by church personnel?

The Catholic Church has done more to protect children than almost any other organization in the United States. Consider:

- Safe Environment training is taking place in 193 dioceses/eparchies of the country. Over 2 million adults have been trained to recognize the behavior of offenders and what to do about it.
- Over 5 million children have been equipped with the skills to help them protect themselves from abuse.
- Background checks are conducted on Church personnel who have contact with children. Over 2 million volunteers and employees; 52,000 clerics; 6,205 candidates for ordination have had their backgrounds evaluated.
- All dioceses/eparchies have Codes of Conduct spelling out what is acceptable behavior. This serves to let people know what can and cannot be done as well as letting others know what behavior can be expected. It encourages the reporting of suspicious behavior.
- All dioceses/eparchies have Victim Assistance Coordinators, assuring victims that they will be heard. In 2009, \$6,536,109 was spent on therapy for the victims of clergy sexual abuse.
- All dioceses/eparchies have Safe Environment Coordinators who assure the ongoing compliance to the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.
- Bishops are meeting with victims.
- Dioceses/eparchies have Healing Masses, retreats for victim/survivors and other reconciliation events.
- There is a Zero Tolerance policy on abusers since 2002. When even a single act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants (CIC, c. 1395 §2; CCEO, c. 1453 §1).⁴
- Dioceses/eparchies require intensive background screening as well as psychological testing for those wishing to enter the seminary.

The Catholic Church has worked hard to protect children. Much has been done but more needs to be done. Until child sexual abuse is no longer a part of society, the Church will continue its efforts to stop it.