

## What happens if the person accused denies the allegation?

If the person denies the allegation then the Diocesan Review Board is convened to examine the allegation and to make a recommendation to the Diocesan Bishop regarding the individual's suitability for ministry.

## Who serves on this Diocesan Review Board?

The Diocese of Pittsburgh can draw on approximately 30 individuals who have agreed to serve on the Diocesan Review Board. These range from parents to lawyers and psychologists. When there is a question about suitability for ministry, the Episcopal Vicar for Canonical Services convenes five members of the Diocesan Review Board to review the case. The membership of that five-member Review Board includes four lay people who are not employees of the Diocese, and a priest.

## What kind of support is offered to victims of abuse?

The Diocese works with each individual to determine the assistance that is necessary and appropriate. This may include counseling, spiritual assistance, and referrals to support groups. The Diocesan Assistance Coordinator works closely with all victims to monitor their changing needs over time.

## What does the Diocese do to assist in the detection and prevention of child sexual abuse?

The Diocese has a number of programs for screening Church personnel, including seminarians, as well as training programs for clergy and ministers who work with children. The Diocese is currently expanding its training programs to help parents and all those who work with children to identify the signs of child sexual abuse and to identify means to prevent such abuse. The Diocese is also studying additional procedures for screening anyone, including volunteers, who have contact with children and work for the Church.

“Let there be no doubt or confusion on anyone's part: For us, your bishops, our obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself...”

— *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*,  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



# Guide to the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy in the Diocese of Pittsburgh

October 2002

Copies of the Diocesan *Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy* are available in pamphlet form from the:

**Department for Communications  
Diocese of Pittsburgh  
111 Boulevard of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1618**

You can also contact  
the Department for Communications  
at **412-456-3020**  
or **communications@diopitt.org**.

The complete policy is also available at  
**www.diopitt.org**.

“The spiritual well-being and safety of anyone entrusted to the care of a priest, especially children, must be the first norm in all pastoral assignments.”

— Bishop Donald W. Wuerl

## **Does the Diocese of Pittsburgh have a written policy on clergy sexual misconduct?**

Since the 1980s the Diocese of Pittsburgh has had set procedures for responding to complaints of clergy sexual misconduct. Those procedures were first revised and publicly issued in 1993. These procedures have now been revised in response to changes in universal norms and the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002.

## **How do I get a copy of this policy?**

Copies of the policy regarding clergy sexual misconduct are available in pamphlet form from the Department for Communications, Diocese of Pittsburgh, 111 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1618. You can also contact the Department for Communications at 412-456-3020, or [communications@diopitt.org](mailto:communications@diopitt.org). The complete policy is also available at [www.diopitt.org](http://www.diopitt.org).

## **What is the basis for the Diocesan policy on clergy sexual misconduct?**

The Diocesan policy is rooted in the following:

✘ *The teachings of the Church found in Scripture and Tradition.* At the heart of the Diocesan policy on clergy sexual misconduct is the dignity of the human person. The policy is meant to protect the rights and dignity of every person.

✘ *The following four principles:*

1. children come first
2. concern for the victims
3. all allegations are reported
4. no cleric with substantiated allegations of sexual misconduct will serve in ministry.

✘ *Church law and regulation.* The Church has established procedures and guidelines to protect the rights of everyone involved in an allegation of clergy sexual misconduct. These range from the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* to the most recent 2002

*USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.*

✘ *The experience of the Diocese.* The Diocesan policy is guided by what has been learned through our own experience in responding pastorally and spiritually to individuals who have come forward with allegations.

## **If I have an allegation of sexual misconduct against a member of the clergy or other person working for the Church, what do I need to do?**

A person who has an allegation should contact the Diocesan Secretariat for Ministerial Leadership, 111 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1618. The Secretariat can also be reached by phone at 412-456-3060, or by e-mail at [clergyreligious@diopitt.org](mailto:clergyreligious@diopitt.org). The Diocese will immediately respond to all allegations of sexual abuse.

## **What happens after I contact the Diocese?**

After the initial report of the allegation is made, the individual making the allegation is interviewed by at least two members of Diocesan staff. This typically includes the Diocesan Assistance Coordinator, who is a lay woman and a licensed social worker in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as well as at least one other member of the Secretariat for Ministerial Leadership. The individual making the allegation is also asked to put his or her allegation in writing.

## **What is the job of the Diocesan Assistance Coordinator?**

The Diocesan Assistance Coordinator aids in the immediate pastoral care of the victims and their families in matters of sexual misconduct. The Assistance Coordinator also keeps the person making an allegation informed of the progress of the review and its outcome.

## **Who will know that I made an allegation?**

While the Diocese understands how difficult it is for someone to come forward and share sensitive information, all allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor will be immediately reported to the appropriate civil authorities. The Diocese cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Still, information is not shared indiscriminately. The cleric against whom the allegation has been made will obviously need to be informed. In addition, only Diocesan staff specifically involved in handling these matters are informed of the allegation.

## **What happens to a person against whom an allegation has been made?**

Once the allegation is made, the priest or any other Church personnel may be placed on leave of absence while the allegation is being investigated. This is not an admission of guilt, nor is it punishment. Rather, the purpose of the leave of absence is to protect everyone involved while the review moves forward.

## **What happens to the priest or deacon if he admits to, or it is established that he has engaged in child sexual abuse?**

If the priest or deacon admits to the abuse or if the allegation has been established, then the priest or deacon is permanently removed from ministry. The priest would no longer be able to celebrate Mass publicly, hear confessions, wear clerical garb, or present himself as a member of the clergy. Meanwhile, the priest or deacon is provided with appropriate assistance such as treatment to help him in addressing his behavior. In all of this, the provisions of Church law must be followed.