



# Protection of Young People

## POLICIES & PRACTICES OF THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

- ‡ The Diocese of Pittsburgh has been firmly committed for many years prior to the approval of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002 to establishing policies and practices where the safety of young people is paramount. Policies in the Diocese of Pittsburgh were in force well before the bishops of the United States first collectively addressed this issue in 1993.
- ‡ The Diocese of Pittsburgh has had strict policies in place since the 1980s for dealing with clergy sexual abuse of minors. Since the very beginning of his administration in 1988, Bishop Wuerl established policies to ensure, in the words of Pope John Paul II, that “there is no place in the priesthood for those who would harm the young.”
- ‡ The diocese has long been committed by policy to removing from ministry any priest, deacon or person who represented the Church and would harm a child.
- ‡ Those policies and practices have been regularly and rigorously refined, updated and expanded to reflect best practices and recommendations as determined by those closely involved with this issue.
- ‡ The Diocese of Pittsburgh has been committed to working closely with victims and their families to provide counseling and reconciliation.
- ‡ The Diocese of Pittsburgh has had a Victim Assistance Coordinator in place since 1993. The Victim Assistance Coordinator, employed full time, meets immediately with all victims and proactively maintains ongoing contact.
- ‡ Outreach programs, in-service for clergy and those dealing directly with the young, a diocesan Review Board and public communication policies have been in place long before the Charter required them.
- ‡ Under diocesan policy, no priest or deacon who has abused a minor is transferred to another ministerial assignment in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and it has been the clear, known and published policy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh well before the Charter that such clergy would be removed from ministry.
- ‡ The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires documents that attest that a priest or deacon from another diocese has never been involved in sexual misconduct with a minor.
- ‡ Prior to 2002, the Diocese of Pittsburgh strongly recommended to those making allegations of sexual abuse of a minor to report such allegations to civil authorities. Since 2002, the Diocese of Pittsburgh itself reports all allegations of victims to civil authorities.
- ‡ Bishop Wuerl has met personally with victims and their families since 1988 and continues to do so today.
- ‡ The diocese has offered outside counseling services and has recommended support groups and social service assistance to victims and their families well before such policies were mandated in 2002.
- ‡ A direct toll-free line is provided and widely publicized for those seeking assistance. It is published on the home page of the diocesan website.

- ‡ Published guidelines are available in English and Spanish on the diocesan website (or by mail) that outline procedures for making complaints concerning sexual abuse and for prompt assistance to victims.
- ‡ In addition to being available on the home page of the diocesan website, notification of the means of accessing diocesan policies, guidelines and procedures is regularly published in the Pittsburgh Catholic and made known to all through secular media.
- ‡ The diocesan Review Board, which includes the parents of victims, has been in place since 1989. With a majority lay membership not employed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Review Board advises the bishop on all allegations of sexual misconduct and suitability for ministry.
- ‡ All priests in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have been provided with the published Code of Pastoral Conduct that outlines standards of ministerial behavior. That Code has been widely publicized within the entire community.
- ‡ All involved in ministry with young people in any form, lay, religious or clergy, employed or volunteer, at any level within the Diocese of Pittsburgh are required to have a formal criminal record check and the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Pennsylvania Act 33-34).
- ‡ All involved in any ministry are required to be trained in, review, understand and sign the published Code of Pastoral Conduct.
- ‡ There is also a full policy printed and distributed throughout the diocese entitled, Sexual Abuse by Diocesan Personnel other than Clerics.
- ‡ All seminarians and candidates for the seminary face these requirements, in addition to extensive psychological screening.
- ‡ Catholic organizations related to the Diocese of Pittsburgh in any fashion are expected to have guidelines, policies and a Code of Conduct in place, and compliance is monitored.
- ‡ The Diocese of Pittsburgh has fully implemented the Protecting God’s Children safe environment program for children, and training sessions are ongoing at the parish and school level throughout the Diocese of Pittsburgh.
- ‡ Every year since 2002, the Diocese of Pittsburgh has undergone a compliance audit by an independent outside agency made up almost entirely of former FBI agents, the Gavin Group, Boston MA. The audit is to assure that the policies and programs of the Diocese of Pittsburgh are in compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Each time the diocese has been found in full and complete compliance, and to “warrant commendation and reference as ‘best practices,’” while noting that the policies and practices of the diocese “exceed the requirements” of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

***In summary, protection of the faithful and young people is the primary concern of the Diocese of Pittsburgh in this area. Well before the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Diocese of Pittsburgh has been committed to responding promptly to allegations of abuse, cooperating fully with civil authorities, reaching out to victims and families for healing and reconciliation, educating clergy, being open to the public, and ensuring the accountability of procedures dealing with abuse.***

*If you have any questions concerning the policies and practices in the Diocese of Pittsburgh on the protection of young people, contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 412.456.3060.*