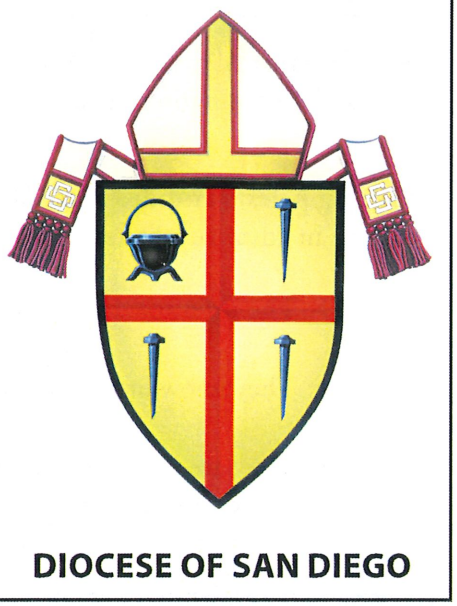
PROTECT AND HEAL



The priests, educators and staff members of the San Diego Catholic Diocese have no higher responsibility than to protect the children and young people entrusted to their care. That's why, starting in 2003, the Diocese and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a series of reforms to prevent the abuse of children and young people.

Under these rules:

- The diocese practices a policy of "zero tolerance." Any priest credibly accused of abusing a minor will be reported to law enforcement and immediately removed from ministry. In addition, his faculties will be revoked and he will not be able to publicly function as a priest in San Diego or any other diocese.

- Similar policies apply to any teacher, staff member or volunteer. No one with a credible accusation of abusing a minor will be employed by the Diocese.

- All clergy, religious women, staff and volunteers dealing with children and young people, more than 3,000 at the diocese, are:

    - Subject to a background check and finger printing that includes continuous checking of federal,state and local criminal databases.

    - Required to go through Safe Environment training and to renew their training every five years.

- All children attending Catholic schools or receiving religious education classes at parishes receive age-appropriate Safe Environment training annually to help them to protect themselves and to encourage them to report inappropriate behavior by their peers and adults. Around 50,000 children receive this training every year.

- Every year, the diocese must submit a report to the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops on how it is complying with these procedures, and every three years the diocese undergoes an on-site audit by an independent auditor. The diocese has been in compliance since its first audit in 2005 and passed its most recent on-site audit last year in 2017.

As part of these reforms, the diocese also created an Independent Review Board to evaluate allegations of abuse and to recommend to the Bishop disciplinary action. The board includes members of law enforcement, mental health, judiciary, a pastor and a social worker. One of the board members is a survivor of clergy sexual abuse.

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VETTING OF CLERGY

Seminarians: All seminarians are required to comply with the Safe Environment requirements for adults. In addition, part of their formation includes a battery of psychological testing that is reviewed by a board that includes lay experts.

Visiting priests and deacons: All priests and deacons who visit or come to minister from outside of the diocese must present in advance a Statement of Suitability issued by their bishop or superior indicating that:

- The priest or deacon is a person of good moral character and reputation.
- They know of nothing that would in any way limit or disqualify the priest or deacon from this ministry.
- They are unaware of anything in his background that would render the priest or deacon unsuitable to work with minors.

HOW WE RESPOND TO A REPORT SEXUAL ABUSE

All reports of abuse are taken by our Victims Assistance Coordinator.

The coordinator immediately will file a report with child protection authorities or local law enforcement, in accordance with Mandated Reporter laws.

The coordinator explores how to assist a victim toward greater well-being. This can include counseling sessions, a meeting with the bishop and financial compensation when appropriate.

The coordinator forwards all reports of abuse to the diocese's Chancery Office.

- Chancery Office reports to law enforcement all cases where the accused is alive and there is any sense of credibility to the accusation.
- The Independent Diocesan Review Board engages a professional investigator to investigate the accusation and to present a report.
- The Independent Diocesan Review Board makes a finding of fact as to whether the allegation is accurate and makes a recommendation as to whether the accused should be barred from ministry in the Church.

Even as these measures are strictly implemented, the diocese's leadership never forgets the terrible wounds the victims of past abuse suffered, as well as their families and parishes. They are doing everything in their power to heal those wounds and to ensure such abuse never happens again.

TO REPORT SEXUAL ABUSE

To report sexual abuse by clergy or church personnel, please contact the diocese's Victims Assistance Coordinator at **(858) 490-8353.**