



Update on Safe Environment Efforts

The Diocese of Rochester is committed to creating a safe environment for all. Numerous initiatives have been undertaken.

“The issue of sexual abuse of children by clergy and others in our Church has caused much pain, alienation from the Church, hardship and understandable anger,” Bishop of Rochester Salvatore R. Matano has stated publicly.

“I join with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and my brother bishops throughout the world in expressing deep sorrow for this tragedy. As the Shepherd of this Diocese, I will continue to work unceasingly to ensure that our parishes, schools and every entity connected to our Diocese are safe and holy environments for all. It is my fervent prayer that any person who has been harmed by a person in a position of trust and authority within our Church will find the spiritual and emotional healing they deserve.”

Most recently, in 2015, the Diocese established a new diocesan Office of Safe Environment Education and Compliance and began a new *Creating a Safe Environment* newsletter for our employees and volunteers to communicate safety information.

In 2014, we established a Creating a Safe Environment Coordinator in every parish.

Our initiatives go back decades. In 1993, we established a Diocesan Review Board to offer guidance in responding to allegations. The Review Board, whose members represent many areas of expertise, regularly meets to this day and helps us immeasurably in the process of policy development, assessment of sexual-abuse complaints, and the development of services for victims.

At that same time, we appointed a Victims’ Assistance Coordinator who receives complaints and organizes assistance that might be helpful for victims and formed and instituted policies concerning sexual abuse and harassment and provided training to all clerics and employees in these areas.

We have reported contemporary allegations of abuse to the appropriate civil authorities, with the result that diocesan priests, in some instances, were arrested, tried and convicted, and canonical proceedings, including laicization, have been initiated.

HELP FOR VICTIMS

Victims of abuse should always report to the civil authorities.

To report a case of possible sexual abuse and to receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, victims are encouraged to contact the Victims’ Assistance Coordinator:

Deborah Housel

Phone (585) 328-3228, ext. 1555

Toll-free 1-800-388-7177, ext. 1555

E-mail: victimsassistance@dor.org

Our Guiding Principles

The Diocese will respond promptly to all allegations of sexual abuse of minors where there is reasonable belief that abuse has occurred;

We will reach out to the victims and their families, and communicate sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being, as well as offer no-cost psychological counseling, opportunities to speak with diocesan leadership, including the Bishop of Rochester, and to take part in spiritual programs to aid healing and reconciliation.

We will remove ministerial privileges from the alleged offender promptly and refer him for appropriate medical evaluation and intervention if such an allegation is supported by sufficient evidence.

We will comply with the obligations of civil law by reporting an incident and cooperating with any official investigation.

We will use open and transparent communications with members of the community, within the confines of respect for privacy of the individuals involved.

Following the promulgation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, the Diocese of Rochester:

- Enhanced our Review Board, particularly with the addition of individuals with extensive law-enforcement experience;
 - Reached out to strengthen our relationships with law-enforcement officials throughout the 12-county Diocese;
 - Reviewed our past responses in individual cases and, when appropriate, removed offenders from public ministry;
 - Strengthened the screening process for men applying as candidates for ordination as priests and deacons;
 - Instituted a program of background checks, including criminal history for clerics, educators, employees and volunteers who would work with children and vulnerable adults;
 - Developed Codes of Conduct and educated clerics, educators, employees and volunteers concerning their applicability in specific settings. Those codes can be reviewed online at www.dor.org;
 - Publicized contact information for our victims' assistance coordinator and offered training to all clerics, educators, employees and volunteers on the process of reporting allegations; and
 - Encouraged victims to report to civil authorities and to seek assistance. In addition, we have continued to report contemporary and past allegations to appropriate civil authorities.
 - Since 2002, we have conducted background checks and provided training for more than 25,000 clerics, educators, employees and volunteers through the Creating a Safe Environment program, a number which continues to increase.
- In 2010, we launched a program to re-train all who work for the Diocese, in parishes, schools and in our affiliated agencies. Training and background checks are renewed every three years.

The Diocese of Rochester has been found in compliance with all provisions of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in annual, independent audits since the first audit was conducted in 2003.

For more information: <http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/safe-environment/>