

# *“Our Promise to Protect”*



Diocese of  
Green Bay

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY**

Most Reverend David Laurin Ricken, D.D., J.C.L.



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See  
Bishop of Green Bay

## DECREE

In June of 2002, an important meeting with the Bishops of the United States implemented the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which pledged the Catholic Church in the United States to protect children and youth from sexual abuse and to establish effective policies that respond to actions that occurred in the past.

*"Our Promise to Protect... Safe Environment Policy"* is the response of the Diocese of Green Bay. Our policy includes individuals at risk as well as children and youth. This policy has been recently reviewed and updated. It is our pledge and commitment to create an environment that protects our children and individuals at risk from harm. We will comply with all laws regarding the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse against children and individuals at risk to the proper civil authorities for investigation. I am committed to continuously reviewing and refining necessary policies and procedures. I hope, and pray, for the healing of all those who have been harmed.

Together we are called to minister to all of God's people and show special care for our children and those who are at risk. We as the Church strive to create environments where all people treat each other with dignity, charity, and respect and that the faithful are served by men and women who fully reflect the love and protection of Jesus Christ.

I hereby promulgate this revised version of *"Our Promise to Protect... Safe Environment Policy"* as particular law for the Diocese of Green Bay effective March 27, 2018. This revised version replaces the previous policy.

Given at the Chancery on March 27, 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Ricken".

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, D.D., J.C.L.  
Bishop of Green Bay

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis C. Baeten".  
Chancellor



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# I. INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Green Bay is committed to creating and providing safe and sacred places in our parishes, schools, and other institutions so that minors and individuals at risk will be protected from any harm, especially sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. This is in agreement with the U.S. Bishops *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, its subsequent revision *Normae de gravioribus delictis* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The Diocese expects its priests, deacons, other ministers, employees, and volunteers to help protect minors and individuals at risk by demonstrating the Church's care and love for all people, by observing the Church's teachings on sexuality and morality and by complying with the policy and procedures described in this manual.

This policy shall apply to the conduct of priests, deacons, other ministers, employees, and volunteers in all parishes, schools, institutions, departments and other entities for which the Diocese of Green Bay is directly responsible. When a credible allegation has been lodged against a priest, deacon or other cleric, a unique set of canonical norms (Church Law) are in effect in addition to the criminal and civil laws and the diocesan policies. The priest, deacon, or cleric may have committed a canonical delict or crime. This canonical legislation does not apply to acts of sexual abuse by laypersons or by religious who are not clerics. Nor does it apply to acts committed by someone before he became a cleric.

**The Diocese of Green Bay will not tolerate the sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor or abuse of an individual at risk by a priest, deacon, other minister, employee or volunteer who is in the service of the Diocese.**

Diocesan representatives will take very seriously every allegation of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. Any person bringing such a complaint will be treated with compassion and understanding.

The Diocese has instituted a mandatory continuing education program concerning the sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors. This program was implemented to help raise awareness and understanding among parents, priests, deacons, school personnel, catechists, youth ministers, staff members, and volunteers who have contact with minors as a part of their volunteer duties.

The Diocese shall also provide information to our parishes and schools to help educate minors on how to be safe and to stay safe. This is intended to enhance the ability of our young people to protect themselves and to communicate more easily when they sense any potential danger.

## Terminology

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For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply to employees, clergy, volunteers, representatives of the Diocese of Green Bay in every, parish, school, or other associated entity insofar as they are subject to the laws of the State of Wisconsin:

**SEXUAL ABUSE:** Sexual abuse includes, but is not necessarily limited to, sexual assault, sexual intercourse, sexually explicit conduct or sexual contact with a minor or individual at risk as defined in Wisconsin State Statutes, Chapter 948.

**SEXUAL EXPLOITATION:**

- Sexual contact between a cleric, other minister, employee or volunteer and a person who is receiving pastoral care from the above-named persons or is working under the authority or supervision of the above-named persons.
- Use of position to obtain sexual contact with another person.
- Solicitation or enticement of another person for purposes of sexual gratification (to include sexual harassment).
- Accessing images of sexual acts involving children (child pornography) via any format, i.e. print and electronic. Wisconsin Statute 948.12(1m) states: Whoever possesses any undeveloped film, photographic negative, photograph, motion picture, videotape, or other recording of a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct under all of the following circumstances is guilty of a Class I felony:
  - (a) The person knows that he or she possesses the material.
  - (b) The person knows the character and content of the sexually explicit conduct in the material.
  - (c) The person knows or reasonably should know that the child engaged in sexually explicit conduct has not attained the age of 18 years.

**MINOR:** Under Wisconsin law, a minor is anyone who has not yet reached the age of 18.

**INDIVIDUAL AT RISK:** Under Wisconsin law, an individual at risk is an adult at risk §55.01 (1e) or an elder adult at risk §46.90 (1). (Wisconsin Statute §940.285).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In state law “Adult at risk” means any adult who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his or her ability to care for his or her needs and who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation.

In state law “Elder adult at risk” means any person age 60 or older who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation.

## **Reporting Requirements of the State of Wisconsin**

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The Diocese of Green Bay will comply with civil law and civil law reporting requirements.

In 1978, the State of Wisconsin enacted a Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law. The main purpose of this law was the protection of the health and welfare of children by mandating the reporting of suspected abuses and neglect. This law, as amended in 1983, clarified the definition of child abuse to include sexual abuse and emotional abuse. It also expanded the list of mandated reporters and increased the fine for failure to report from \$100.00 to \$1,000.00.

Wisconsin State Statute 48.981 (2), requires any school administrator, teacher, school psychologist, school employee not otherwise specified, counselor, child care worker in a day care center or child care center, day care provider, alcohol and/ or drug abuse counselor, speech-language pathologist, audiologist, nurse, catechist, religious education director/coordinator, or related professional or other specified person(s), having reasonable cause to suspect that a child seen in the course of professional duties has been abused or neglected or having reason to believe that a child seen in the course of professional duties has been threatened with abuse or neglect or that abuse or neglect of a child will occur, is obligated to report the case immediately, by telephone or personal visit to the local County Child Welfare Agency, the County Sheriff's Office, the City Police Department or the Tribal Government for Native American Children.

Wisconsin Statute §48.981 (2) (bm) requires a member of the clergy to report suspected child abuse or threats of such abuse, whether perpetrated by another member of the clergy or by someone else. Wisconsin law does not require a priest to report what he hears in confession or through confidential communications made to him privately. However, diocesan policy states a priest must report any information heard outside of the Sacrament of Penance.

A priest or deacon who hears such information, either in a confessional or through confidential communications, should encourage those with knowledge of physical or sexual abuse of minors to bring it to the attention of civil and Church authorities so that appropriate action can be taken.

Any other person not listed as a mandated reporter under Wisconsin Statute §48.981, having reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or having reason to believe that a child has been threatened with such abuse, are strongly encouraged to report the allegation. Although not legally required to do so, the Diocese emphasizes such reporting.

### **Legal Requirements for Reporting**

Parish, school, and religion education personnel/catechists shall tell their administrator of their suspicions. Remember that notification to the administrator alone DOES NOT FULFILL the legal requirement for reporting. The mandated reporter must report immediately to the County Department of Human Services, Sheriff/Police Department, or the Tribal Government for Native American Children. When appropriate, further follow through to determine what action has been taken will be implemented.

### **Information Needed for the Report**

1. The child's name, age, and address.
2. Name, address, and telephone number of child's caretaker.
3. The nature and extent of the child's injury or condition.



4. Information that might help to identify the person(s) responsible for the child's injury or condition.
5. Present whereabouts of the child.
6. Any factors contributing to high risk.

#### Good Faith/Not Legally Liable

Wisconsin law clearly states that those reporting in good faith are not held legally liable, even if the report cannot be proven. For the purpose of any civil or criminal proceeding, the good faith of any person reporting shall be presumed.

#### Penalty for Failure to Report

Whoever intentionally violates Wisconsin State Statute 48.981 (6) by failing to report may be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned not more than 6 months or both.

#### Proof not Required

The reporter does not have to prove that child abuse has occurred. Child abuse is to be reported as soon as it is suspected. Waiting for proof may mean further risk to the child. Proving child abuse should be left to trained investigators.

#### Confidentiality

The County Department of Human Services, the Sheriff/Police Department, or the Tribal Government for Native American Children may not reveal the name of the reporter to the child's parents or guardians.

#### Responsibility of Human Services

Within 24 hours of receiving a report, the County Department of Human Services will screen the report to determine if an investigation is warranted and how quickly an investigation will be conducted. If an investigation is conducted, the person making the investigation will interview and/or observe the child, and, if warranted, visit the child's home. The child's parents or guardians are almost always interviewed as part of the process. The County Department of Human Services may contact, observe or interview the child at any location without permission from the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).

### **Diocesan Procedures for Reporting Sexual Abuse or Sexual Exploitation of a Minor in a Catholic School or Faith Formation Program**

Any school or faith formation personnel or catechist having reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited shall use the following procedure to report:

1. Report the suspicion immediately to the County Department of Human Services or Sheriff/Police Department or the Tribal Government for Native American Children.
2. Notify the school Principal/Faith Formation Administrator as soon as possible. If notification of the school Principal/Faith Formation Administrator is not practical or possible, contact the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools or the Office of Children and Youth Faith Formation as appropriate.
3. The school Principal/ Faith Formation Administrator must first ensure that civil authorities have been notified and then must notify either the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools or the Office of Children and Youth Faith Formation as appropriate, as soon as possible.

4. The school Principal/ Faith Formation Administrator must then notify the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment 920-272-8174 as soon as possible.

**Reporting Abuse of an Individual at Risk** \_\_\_\_\_

If someone is in imminent danger, call 911, police, or the hospital emergency room. To discuss issues of suspected neglect, abuse, or exploitation of individuals at risk, call the *Wisconsin Bureau on Aging and Long-Term Care Resources* telephone line at (608) 246-7013. Ask for the contact names and numbers for Adult Protective Services in your home county.

## II. POLICY ON MAINTAINING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

The Diocese of Green Bay is committed to creating, providing and maintaining safe environments in all its parishes, schools, and other institutions so that all persons, especially children, young people and individuals at risk, will be protected as far as possible from all harm particularly sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors and abuse of individuals at risk. This policy is in compliance with *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Diocese expects its priests, deacons, other ministers, employees, and volunteers to help protect children, young people and individuals at risk by demonstrating the Church's care and love for all people and by observing the Church's teachings on sexual morality.

All priests, deacons, other ministers and employees are required to:

- Complete an application form prior to hire or authorization for ministry in which they:
  - 1) provide the Diocese with professional/personal references;
  - 2) complete, sign and date the appropriate declaration form;
  - 3) authorize a criminal background check and receive a satisfactory report.
- Complete the VIRTUS Adult Awareness Training Session within 30 days of date of hire. Those employees in positions with immediate access to minors and/or individuals at risk must complete VIRTUS training prior to first day of service.
- Complete ongoing monthly educational bulletins. (Select personnel\*)
- Sign the Acknowledgement and Agreement Form in which they acknowledge receipt of "*Our Promise to Protect*" Safe Environment Policy of the Diocese of Green Bay and agree to follow and adhere to the Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct.
- Review and observe *Our Promise to Protect*" Safe Environment Policy.

All adult volunteers who have contact with minors and individuals at risk as part of their volunteer duties are required to:

- Complete an application form prior to beginning volunteer service in which they:
  - 1) provide the Diocese with professional/personal references;
  - 2) complete, sign and date the appropriate declaration form;
  - 3) authorize a criminal background check and receive a satisfactory report.
- Complete the VIRTUS Adult Awareness Training Session prior to beginning volunteer service.
- Sign the Agreement Form in which they agree to follow and adhere to the Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct for Volunteers.

All youth volunteers (under the age of 18) are required to adhere to the provisions of the Youth Application and Youth Code of Conduct.

VIRTUS attendance within another diocese may be recognized if there is an approved online training record of session attendance at VIRTUS.org. If there is no approved online VIRTUS.org record from another diocese, the VIRTUS<sup>®</sup> Protecting God's Children Adult Awareness Session must be re-taken in the Diocese of Green Bay.

Failure to comply with these requirements will result in the removal of the person from employment, ministry, or the denial of volunteer service within the diocese.

**\*Select Personnel:** Mandatory Ongoing VIRTUS Monthly Bulletin Readers

Business Administrator with Personnel Responsibilities  
Business Manager with Personnel Responsibilities  
Camp Tekakwitha Director & Assistant Director  
Catechetical Leader  
Catholic Charities Personnel  
Deacon  
Deacon Candidate  
Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education/Faith Formation  
Diocesan Professional Personnel  
Family Life Minister  
Instructional Aide/Tutor  
Local Safe Environment Coordinator  
Parish Nurse & Priest Nurse  
Pastoral Associate  
Pastoral Leaders  
Pastoral Minister  
Priest  
Principal  
Seminarian  
Special Religious Ed. Facilitator  
System Administrator  
Teacher/Substitute Teacher  
Youth Minister/Coordinator  
VIRTUS Facilitator

### **III. DIOCESAN CODE OF PASTORAL CONDUCT FOR PRIESTS, DEACONS, SEMINARIANS, OTHER MINISTERS AND EMPLOYEES**

The Diocese of Green Bay expects its priests, deacons, seminarians, other ministers, and employees to conduct themselves appropriately in their relationships with the people they serve including individuals at risk and especially with minors.

The following Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct in pastoral situations. This Code of Conduct has been developed in compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the *Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II* and with the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*.

Responsibility for adherence to the Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual, but the support and observance of the Code is an important concern for all. Those who disregard this Code will be subject to remedial action by the Bishop, his representative or that person's supervisor. Corrective action may take various forms depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm done. For clerics this action may range from a verbal warning to removal from ministry. For lay employees this action may range from a verbal warning to discharge from employment depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm done.

#### **Conduct With Minors**

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When working with minors, always maintain an open and trustworthy relationship. The following rules will apply.

1. Be aware of your own and others' vulnerability when working alone with minors. Use a team approach to managing youth activities.
2. Physical contact with minors can be misconstrued and is to be avoided unless it is public, completely appropriate and non-sexual.
3. If inappropriate personal or physical attraction develops between an adult (a cleric or an employee) and a minor, the adult is responsible for maintaining clear professional boundaries.
4. Avoid being alone with a minor person in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area.
5. In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the minor, take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm. Use a team approach to manage emergency situations.
6. Minors unaccompanied by parents or legal guardians must never be allowed to stay overnight in the rectory or the priest's private residence.
7. The illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly prohibited. Never use alcohol when working with minors.
8. Minors must never be provided with alcohol, illegal drugs, sexually provocative materials or any illegal materials.
9. Taking photos of minors while they are unclothed or undressing is prohibited by law.

## **Conduct With Individuals at Risk**

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When working with individuals at risk, always maintain an open and trustworthy relationship. The following rules will apply.

1. Be aware of your own and others' vulnerability when working with individuals at risk.
2. Physical contact with individuals at risk can be misconstrued and is to be avoided unless completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate.
3. If inappropriate personal or physical attraction develops between a priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister or employee and an individual at risk, the priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister or employee is responsible for maintaining clear professional boundaries.
4. The illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly prohibited. Never use alcohol when working with individuals at risk.
5. Individuals at risk must never be provided with alcohol, illegal drugs, sexually provocative materials or any illegal materials.

## **Confidentiality**

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Trust is one of the cornerstones in all pastoral relations. It is important to emphasize that all employees understand they have an ethical duty not to disclose confidential information they may come upon during the course of employment.

People are also accustomed to speaking in confidence with a priest or deacon because of the trust they have in the clergy. To avoid breaking that trust, priests and deacons shall continue to respect the confidentiality entrusted to them

Under no circumstances whatsoever may a priest disclose, even indirectly, information received through the confessional in accord with Canons 983 and 984 of the *Code of Canon Law*. Information disclosed to a priest or deacon or other minister during the course of counseling or spiritual direction or in a pastoral conversation must be held in the strictest confidence and it is to be considered privileged information except as required to be reported to the appropriate governmental authorities under Wisconsin Statute §48.981.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

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Avoid all situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

For example, conflicts of interest may arise when the independent judgment of a priest, deacon, or other minister, while serving as a pastoral counselor or spiritual director, is impaired by prior dealings; becoming personally involved; or becoming an advocate for one person against another. When this becomes evident, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director shall advise the parties that he/she can no longer provide pastoral services and shall refer them to another pastoral counselor or spiritual director.

## **Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

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Priests, deacons, seminarians, other ministers, and employees have a responsibility for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. They also have a duty to report breaches of this Code of Pastoral Conduct whether by themselves or by others. When uncertainty exists regarding a situation or course of conduct that violates this Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with professionals who are knowledgeable about ethical issues.

When there is an indication of questionable action by a priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister, and employee, immediately notify the Diocesan Assistance Coordinator or the person's immediate supervisor.

## **Pastoral Counseling Standards**

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Priests, deacons and others who provide pastoral counseling and spiritual direction must maintain appropriate boundaries and adhere to the following rules:

1. Never step beyond your competence in pastoral counseling situations; limit the number of pastoral counseling sessions to three or less. Refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.
2. Assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all situations involving pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. Sexual intimacies with persons being counseled or directed, including forced physical contact and inappropriate sexual comments, are absolutely forbidden and may result in the immediate loss of ministry or employment.
3. Avoid physical contact of any kind that could be misconstrued. Sessions must be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times, not in private living quarters and not in places or at times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship to the person(s) being counseled or directed.

## **Witness to Chastity**

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No priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister, or employee shall, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

Priests and those deacons who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all their relationships at all times. Deacons and employees who are married are called to be examples of marital chastity at all times. Employees who are single or widowed are called to be examples of chastity in the single life.

No priest, deacon, seminarian, other minister, or employee may exploit another person for sexual purposes including possession or use of pornography. Priests, deacons, seminarians, other ministers and employees are to review, be familiar with and committed to the contents of the diocesan sexual abuse policies – *“Our Promise to Protect”* Safe Environment Policy.

## **IV. SEXUAL ABUSE OR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS AND ABUSE OF INDIVIDUALS AT RISK BY A PRIEST OR DEACON**

Priests and deacons occupy important places of service in our Church. They do so with extraordinary generosity and care. Unfortunately, sometimes an individual priest or deacon may seriously overstep boundaries and misuse his position and power. The norms of church law govern procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors or abuse of individuals at risk. As the Essential Norms state: “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.”

### **Prevention**

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In order to prevent such misconduct, the Diocese will use the following measures to screen both candidates for Ordination and priests or deacons who offer their service to the Diocese.

#### Candidates for Ordination

All candidates for priesthood or permanent diaconate will have a criminal background check and will be screened through psychological evaluation, interviews and references in an attempt to determine whether there is any history of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors or individuals at risk either as a victim or a perpetrator.

#### Priests and Deacons New to the Diocese

Whenever a priest or deacon from a religious community or another diocese requests a transfer to the Diocese of Green Bay, a criminal background check will be made to determine whether there is any history of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. A letter of reference will also be required from his bishop or religious superior with full disclosure of any known history of allegations of sexual abuse, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation, especially with minors. Refer to *Policy Regarding Background Checks for Priests and Deacons Coming into the Diocese of Green Bay*.

#### Continuing Education

Priests and deacons will continue to participate in mandatory sexual abuse prevention training. The Diocese will offer workshops to help priests and deacons learn how to maintain boundaries and avoid any kind of sexual misconduct. These workshops will include information about the requirements for reporting sexual misconduct.

### **Reporting Sexual Abuse or Sexual Exploitation of Minors or Abuse of Individuals at Risk by a Priest or Deacon to the Diocese**

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The sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor or abuse of an individual at risk by a priest or deacon causes pain and suffering. Both justice and compassion call the Diocese to respond to the harm done. Once a complaint of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor or abuse of an individual at risk has been brought to the Diocese, an authorized representative of the Diocese shall make every effort to move the process along in a timely, sensitive, and professional manner. The process works best when the person bringing the complaint has the support of a knowledgeable relative or friend. The person may also want to engage the assistance of a civil attorney or a person who is an expert in Church law (Canon lawyer).



## **How to Bring a Complaint**

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To report an incident of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor:

If you know of an incident of sexual abuse of a person who is currently under the age of 18 by a priest, deacon, employee or volunteer, please immediately call the civil authorities first and then the Diocese.

If the person was abused as a minor and is now an adult, please contact the Diocese. We also encourage you to contact civil authorities.

**Call:** The Diocesan Office of Safe Environment, at 1-877-270-8174 or 920-272-8174.

**Write to:** Diocesan Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Green Bay, P.O. Box 23825, Green Bay, WI 54305-3825. Letters should be marked ***Personal and Confidential*** and indicate when and how the person making the complaint can be contacted for further information.

## **The Diocese Shall Take Every Complaint Seriously**

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The Diocese will respond promptly and seriously to every complaint of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor or abuse of an individual at risk by a priest, deacon, or other cleric. When the Diocese receives an allegation that a priest or deacon has engaged in sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor or abuse of an individual at risk, it will immediately begin an investigation and follow the procedures of church law. The Diocese will offer the alleged victim pastoral assistance and/or counseling that may be required.

During the diocesan investigation the rights of all those who are involved, including both the person making the allegation and the person accused of misconduct, will be protected.

Under all circumstances, the Diocese reaffirms its commitment to work with the proper civil authorities with regard to all criminal sexual misconduct. In addition to compliance with the law, the Diocese directs all personnel, even those who are not mandated reporters, to report their knowledge or belief of the sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors and abuse of individuals at risk to their supervisor or director.

Priests and deacons are required to report actual or suspected sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor. Furthermore, clergy are required to report cases where they have reasonable cause to believe, based on either observation or information received, that a member of the clergy has abused a minor or threatened to abuse a minor. However, given the nature of the seal of confession even recognized by civil law, a priest may not share any information received in the Sacrament of Penance.

An important part of the diocesan investigatory procedure is to make a judgment regarding the continuation of ministry or return to ministry for a priest or deacon who was accused of sexual misconduct. The Diocesan Bishop, in accord with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the Essential Norms, relies on input from the Independent Review Board. The Board consists of members of outstanding integrity and good judgment – a pastor, a deacon, and lay persons with expertise in health care, social work, psychology, law enforcement, and experts in civil law.

The Board is to:

1. Review and make recommendations regarding the continuation in ministry of clergy who have allegedly sexually abused or exploited minors.
2. Review and make recommendations regarding the return to ministry of priests and deacons following their removal from active ministry when allegations are found to be unsubstantiated.
3. Review and make recommendations concerning changes to existing policies or the adoption of new sexual misconduct policies.

When civil authorities are involved with a criminal investigation, the Diocese will defer to their investigative process. However, the Diocese will also use every reasonable means to investigate any allegation of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor or abuse of an individual at risk by a cleric since it may be necessary to take disciplinary action even if a crime is not proven.

### **Response to Parishes Experiencing the Pain Due to the Sexual Abuse or Sexual Exploitation of Minors or Abuse of Individuals at Risk by Clergy**

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When a priest or deacon engages in sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors or abuse of individuals at risk, people are harmed and many are affected. This is true not only of those directly involved in the misconduct, but also of parish members where the cleric currently serves or has served in the past. The Diocese shall respond, guided by three important principles:

**First**, the Diocese acknowledges that one of the most important elements in healing is to inform the parish about what happened as completely and accurately as possible. Information helps dispel the atmosphere of distrust that may be fed by rumor, by the sudden departure of a priest or deacon assigned to the parish, or by the impression that a "cover-up" is being imposed. Information that is provided also helps others to come forward, and assures that appropriate steps will be taken so that the faith community can truly move forward.

While committed to disclosure and transparency, communications may be limited because of the need to respect the privacy of the person victimized and his/her family, as well as the need to protect the rights of the person accused. It is not always appropriate to share information that is gathered during the early stages of an investigation since this information is not always free of confusion or contradiction lacking substantiation.

**Second**, the Diocese acknowledges that the healing of a parish is a multi-disciplinary challenge. Neither diocesan representatives nor a parish representative can respond to all of the concerns and problems that arise in the aftermath of clergy sexual abuse of minors and individuals at risk. As a result, the Diocese will provide a team of professionals to help foster healing in those parishes affected.

**Third**, the Diocese acknowledges that parishes undergo a complex process of grieving. When people learn that a respected leader has been accused, there may be a reluctance to believe that the report could be true, a reflection of the longstanding belief that in our country an accused person is innocent until proven guilty. This attitude can also create a burden on those who, often after a long struggle, have found the courage to bring forth important information. Denial is usually followed by other well-known steps in grieving a loss, including depression and significant anger against the accused, the accuser(s), the Diocese, and the whole Catholic Church. Only after time passes and the appropriate steps are taken can a parish truly move forward in its mission.

## V. SEXUAL ABUSE OR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS OR ABUSE OF INDIVIDUALS AT RISK BY AN EMPLOYEE

### Reporting Sexual Abuse or Sexual Exploitation of a Minor

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Lay employees are subject to civil law as well as to the principles and policies in this document that pertain to them. The Diocese urges anyone with personal knowledge of the sexual abuse of a minor by any person providing service to the church, and who is not bound by legal or professional confidentiality, to report such conduct to the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment.

The person reporting will be advised to report the incident to the civil authorities and when necessary, of the legal obligation to do so. The Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator will offer to help in making provisions for the immediate pastoral and spiritual care of the person who was allegedly abused. This care may include professional counseling. Since a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, the rights of the accused as well as those of the complainant must be protected to the fullest extent possible.

Reporting an incident of sexual abuse may be done in person with the assistance of a family member, friends, or an attorney, by letter or by phone. Letters should be marked Personal and Confidential and indicate how and when the person reporting can be contacted for further information.

If you know of an incident of sexual abuse of a person who is currently under the age of 18 by a priest, deacon, employee or volunteer, please immediately call the civil authorities first and then the Diocese.

If the person was abused as a minor and is now an adult, please contact the Diocese. We also encourage you to contact civil authorities.

**Call:** The Diocesan Office of Safe Environment, at 1-877-270-8174 or 920-272-8174.

**Write to:** Diocesan Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Green Bay, P.O. Box 23825, Green Bay, WI 54305-3825. Letters should be marked **Personal and Confidential** and indicate when and how the person making the complaint can be contacted for further information.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors or abuse of individuals at risk is complex as well as terribly harmful. No simple or uniform methodology can provide an effective response because each instance has unique aspects that require adaptation. However, experience demonstrates it is possible for individuals and communities to heal from the effects of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. This is not easily or quickly accomplished. Effective counseling, support groups and spiritual direction are tools which are often required for this healing.

The Diocese is committed to doing all that it can to:

- Promote safe, healthy communities of faith.
- Intervene effectively when there is sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.
- Respond fairly and compassionately to those harmed by sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

We do this because of our faith in Jesus Christ and His call to us to act justly and compassionately.

The Diocese will continue to refine its response to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of minors or abuse of individuals at risk. Careful reflection on experience, and continued study by ourselves and others will contribute to an even better response.