

Since 1985, the Diocese of Owensboro has had a policy dealing with the issue of sexual abuse. It was revised in 1995 and now updated in 2003 to meet the new Church laws for the Catholic Church in the United States. Our Bishop is committed to seeing that justice is provided and that all of the faithful are protected from all crimes.

- The Diocese has a Review Board, which advises the Bishop in dealing with allegations of sexual abuse. The Board is mandated to have members who are qualified in dealing with such issues. At least five members must be in full communion with the Church.

- All allegations of abuse presented to the Bishop or to any personnel of the Diocese are discussed and investigated by the Review Board. The Board presents to the Bishop both the allegation and its credibility. The Board also assists the Bishop with the reporting of all allegations, promoting a Safe Environment Program for the Diocese, and monitoring the compliance of all parishes and institutions with the Diocesan policy.

- All credible allegations against a person acting in the name of the Church will be reported by the Diocese to State authorities. The only exception is that which is sealed by the Sacrament of Confession.

- An Assistance Coordinator is appointed by the Bishop to aid those persons victimized by Church personnel. The role includes assisting the victim and/or his/her family in obtaining counseling and spiritual direction. The Coordinator also assists victims whose abuse occurred in another Diocese.

- When the alleged victim is a minor, the Diocese will immediately report the incident to the State authorities. During the preliminary investigation and while working with the State authorities, the Bishop may remove the accused cleric from his assignment and/or the office he holds. The Bishop may also remove his priestly faculties, which include preaching and the administration of the Sacraments

- Once the preliminary investigation is completed and the accused cleric is perceived as guilty, the Bishop will provide a full explanation of the allegation and the findings of the investigation to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Bishop may recommend dismissal from the priesthood either by a trial by the Diocesan Tribunal; by an action taken by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; or in exceptional circumstances by the Holy Father. The cleric may also request a dispensation from his priestly promises (laicization). Due to age or other extenuating circumstances, the Bishop may decide to penalize the offending cleric by no longer allowing him to present himself as a priest; wear clerical clothes; offer Mass publicly; and to administer any Sacrament except for the Sacrament of Confession in the case of a person near death.



- If the accused cleric is no longer living in the Diocese, the Bishop will assist the State authorities and the victim with information concerning the cleric, including where he lives. The services of the Assistance Coordinator will be offered to this victim as well.

- If the accused cleric is deceased, following a thorough investigation, assistance will be offered to the victim through the Assistance Coordinator.

- Throughout the entire process, the Diocese will be diligent in affording all parties (the victim, the accused, and the faithful) their due rights as found in both civil and canon law.

- The Diocese requires a criminal background check on all employees, volunteers, and prospective seminarians, who work with the children and youth of the Diocese. Each of these individuals will receive a copy of the Diocesan policy concerning sexual abuse and be required to sign a statement that s/he understands and accepts the policy.

- As required by laws of the Church, the Diocese will provide all clerics, employees, volunteers, youth and their parents, appropriate education about sexual abuse. The Diocese will do all that is humanly possible to reach out in assistance to all victims of sexual abuse. The Diocese is committed to educating people about this crime and assisting people so they may find safety and healing.

- All clerics, employees, and volunteers will be educated concerning proper ways to work with the youth and children of the Diocese. Of great importance are the guidelines developed for all involved in Youth Ministry and Religious Education.

- Any employee or volunteer in the Diocese who is accused of sexual abuse will be reported to the proper authorities. If found guilty of such a crime, s/he will lose the position s/he holds in accord with civil law. The Diocese will always cooperate fully with the State authorities in this matter.

- The parishes and Diocesan institutions will advise their members of the policy concerning sexual abuse. Copies of the policy including forms for reporting sexual abuse are to be made available to everyone.

- The Diocese will not enter any confidentiality agreements when dealing with a situation of abuse.

- Anyone coming to assist a parish or a Diocesan institution, e.g. at a parish mission, must have his/her superior/organization present to the Bishop a letter stating that this person is not known to have abused children.

- Anyone falsely accused of sexual abuse has the right in both State and Church law to seek justice for the crime of false denunciation or calumny.

To contact the Bishop or a member of the Review Board, please write or call the Catholic Pastoral Center:

600 Locust Street
Owensboro, KY 42301

270-683-1545



Allegation of Sexual Abuse Form

This form is meant to assist anyone who wishes to report an incident of sexual abuse perpetrated by someone acting in the name of the Church. All information submitted will be given to the Bishop and the Diocesan Review Board and will remain confidential. All credible reports will be given to State authorities. Upon receipt of this form the Bishop, the Assistance Coordinator or a member of the Review Board will be in contact.

The Diocese supports your right to report the claim directly to a local law enforcement agency. The Diocese will cooperate fully in any investigation that is initiated.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone numbers where you can be reached:

Are you the alleged victim? _____

If not, what is the victim's name? _____

How old is the victim now? _____

At the time of the incident? _____

Who is the alleged abuser? _____

Your signature and date: _____

Add additional paper if necessary.

Summary of the "Statement of Policy and Procedures on Sexual Abuse" for the Diocese of Owensboro



Due to the length and somewhat complicated nature of the policy, this summary is provided for the faithful of the Diocese of Owensboro. This work is not intended to present the entire policy. Copies of the complete policy are available from any parish, any Diocesan institution or from the Catholic Pastoral Center.