

DIOCESE OF MADISON

Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Harassment

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Scripture tells us that from the very beginning man and woman were created in the image and likeness of God, and that God saw all creation as very good (see Genesis 1:26–31). Therefore, our identity as “good people” is a significant aspect of God’s plan of creation. Consequently, it is with appreciation, wonder, and respect for the goodness of God instilled in all people by their creator that we approach the phenomena of sexual abuse of minors, adult sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment.

In November 1992, the Bishops of the United States stated “all our actions should show our Church as a living, caring, and healing Church. We pledge again our care and concern for all victims of sexual abuse, wherever and however it occurs. We commit ourselves anew to bring the healing ministry of our Church to our people, to dialogue and pray with all who have suffered, and to foster opportunities for reconciliation” (NCCB Resolution, November 19, 1992).

In November 2002, the Bishops of the United States, responding to the crisis involving the sexual abuse of minors and young people by some priests and bishops, issued the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. In that document, the Bishops reaffirmed the obligation of all involved with the Church to “protect young people and to prevent sexual abuse” since this “flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself.” This Diocesan Church takes seriously the principles in the *Charter* as well as the accompanying *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, which became effective March 1, 2003 and were incorporated into the 2003 policy and this renewed policy of 2009.

Aware that the great majority of priests, seminarians, deacons, women and men religious, lay employees, and volunteers are competent, ethical, balanced, and mature; concerned that any victim of sexual abuse of a minor, sexual misconduct, or sexual harassment be nurtured, treated and healed; concerned for the ministerial well-being of our people in general; and concerned that a perpetrator of sexual abuse be treated justly toward whatever healing is possible; the following **Policy** regarding the sexual abuse of minors, sexual misconduct involving adults, and sexual harassment is adopted by the Diocese of Madison.

This Policy is effective January 1, 2009, replacing the former policy from November 2003, and applies to all priests, seminarians, deacons, women and men religious, and lay men and women employed by or utilized as volunteers by the Diocese of Madison, its parishes, schools, institutions, offices or programs; and to all priests and deacons incardinated in a Diocese other than the Diocese of Madison serving in any capacity here; and to women and men religious serving in any capacity within the Diocese of Madison.

After January 1, 2009, any individual who begins serving as a priest, deacon or seminarian, all women and men religious, all lay men and women employees, and all who are regularly utilized as volunteers working primarily with children, are to sign a statement acknowledging receipt of this policy and their agreement to abide by it (see Appendix V for text). Those individuals listed above who have signed the 2003 policy are not required to sign the 2009 policy as any revisions that were made were for the sake of clarifying the 2003 policy rather than changing the 2003 policy. Failure to sign the statement is deemed reason for termination.

Regarding volunteers:

(1) Anyone who serves as a volunteer for the Diocese of Madison, its parishes, schools, institutions, offices or programs is expected to abide by the various provisions of this document.

(2) A background search will be conducted for any person prior to acceptance for service as a volunteer (see Appendix II).

(3) Those who are regularly utilized as volunteers are to sign the "Statement of Receipt and Agreement" at the time they agree to serve as a volunteer (see Appendix V). Although this requirement also applies to those who serve in liturgical ministries (such as usher, lector, Eucharistic minister, etc.), it primarily applies to those who serve as volunteers in any capacity involving young people under age 18 (such as at the Diocesan summer camp, schools, in religious education programs or other youth ministry programs), or in any position which would otherwise be filled by an employee.

The Sexual Abuse Review Board (see Appendix I for a description of this group) will review the policy at least every three years, making any necessary recommendations for modification.

Any woman or man religious or any lay person employed by or regularly utilized as a volunteer by the Diocese must sign the acknowledgement and agreement at the time of hiring or volunteering (see Appendix V); any man desiring ordination as a priest must sign the acknowledgement and agreement at the time he applies for Diocesan sponsorship; any man desiring ordination as a permanent deacon must sign the acknowledgement and agreement at the time he applies for acceptance into the formation program; any priest or deacon from outside the Diocese of Madison must sign the acknowledgement and agreement before he may serve as priest or deacon here; any woman or man religious must sign the acknowledgement and agreement before serving in any capacity in the Diocese of Madison. Anyone who refuses to sign the statement may not be employed, serve as a volunteer, be accepted for sponsorship as a seminarian, be accepted into the permanent deacon formation program, or serve as a priest or deacon in the Diocese of Madison.