



Diocese of Madison

Updated September 03, 2019

Frequently Asked Questions Re: About the review of files and the listing of names

Why was this review undertaken?

While diocesan leadership had high confidence in its handling of issues related to allegations of sexual abuse of minors, most especially in living memory, the review was undertaken as a means of assuring current diocesan leadership, the Catholic faithful, and the public at large that any and all credible allegations of sexual abuse of minor against clergy (bishops, priests, deacons, and current seminarians) of the Diocese of Madison have, indeed, been reported and that there are no unknown allegations of sexual abuse of minors against clergy of the Diocese of Madison that need to be investigated, judged, or reported. The file review is one part of an ongoing process of this diocese to address, head-on, allegations of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and to strive for greater excellence in the protection of minors and vulnerable persons.

What was reviewed?

Any existent files for clergy personnel of the Diocese of Madison were reviewed. This included files dating back to the founding of the Diocese of Madison in 1946, for all priests, bishops, and deacons belonging to the Diocese of Madison. In addition, priest personnel files for any religious priests or brothers presently serving the diocese, and any extern priests presently serving within the diocese were reviewed, with the intention of acting on any issues found as well as reporting issues to sponsoring dioceses or organizations. Finally, files of all current diocesan seminarians were reviewed. In total, the files of over 500 individuals were scrutinized. In addition to personnel files, diocesan archives were combed for any correspondence or other materials that might point or provide clues to clergy issues not recorded in personnel files. In an effort to be completely thorough, a similar review was undertaken for any files having to do with legal action involving clergy issues that for some reason might not be present within personnel files.

How were the review findings reported?

A final report on the findings of the Defenbaugh and Associates review were delivered to diocesan counsel, who were the contracting agents for the review. Together, they provided all findings to incoming-Bishop Donald Hying and other diocesan leadership.

What did the findings produce?

The findings of the Defenbaugh and Associates review have been helpful in cataloguing a number of issues which have already been investigated, judged, and reported upon by the Diocese of Madison in the past. In addition, the findings offer assurances that there are no priests of the Diocese of Madison who have been credibly accused of the crimes of sexual abuse of minors, who have not now been named publicly. At the time that the conclusion of the file review was announced, the Diocese of Madison announced the name of one additional priest, now determined by the diocesan Sexual Abuse Review Board to be credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors, as well as the open investigation of a priest whose accuser came forward after the file review was announced. (There also remains the ongoing investigation of one additional priest, made known to the Diocese of Madison prior to the announcement of the file review.)

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Who then are the priests named?

[Priests of the Diocese of Madison named as credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors can be found here.](#)

Is a determination of a credible allegation the same as a criminal conviction?

A determination by the bishop and the review board, that an allegation against a clergy member is credible does not necessarily mean they were found guilty of a crime or are liable for civil claims or criminal prosecution. Often the determination of a credible allegation is independent of any action taken by law enforcement, and it might not have been proven in an ecclesiastical court. It simply means that the allegation is regarded as believable.

It is diocesan policy to comply with all relevant laws and rights in reporting. The diocese pledges full cooperation with law enforcement. In any case wherein an open criminal investigation is underway and known to the diocese, the diocese's own investigation is typically paused so as not to interfere with the investigative work of law enforcement. Once criminal procedures and any appeals are complete, the diocesan investigation recommences, even if an accused clergy member was not convicted in the criminal prosecution.

As always, any allegation of sexual misconduct should be brought to the attention of law enforcement officials. If allegations involve priests, deacons, or other Church personnel, regardless of when they are said to have occurred, they should also be reported to the Diocese of Madison, by way of the Sexual Misconduct Question and Reporting Line, 608-821-3162. The diocesan policies regarding sexual abuse allegations, and instructions for making a report of sexual misconduct, are available on the diocesan website: madisondiocese.org/safe-environment.

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