

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY OF THE DIOCESE OF TRENTON

A Brief History

In the early 1990's the Bishop of Trenton, The Most Reverend John C. Reiss, recognized the need to establish norms for handling allegations of sexual abuse by priests, deacons or other diocesan employees. A formal policy was established to deal with abuse complaints.

An integral part of this policy was the formation of a Diocesan Response Team composed of laypersons from the judicial, legal, educational, law enforcement and therapeutic communities who would act as an advisory board to ensure an immediate response to allegations of sexual abuse by anyone in the work of the Church.

Update

Upon his appointment as Bishop of Trenton, The Most Reverend John M. Smith endorsed the existence and function of the Diocesan Response Team and in 2002 he expanded the size and scope of the Team (which was mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and was renamed as the Diocesan Review Board).

Following the well-publicized meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in July of 2002, the Diocese of Trenton revised its sexual abuse policy of 1993.

What is being done presently?

In revising its policy, the Diocese of Trenton joined with other New Jersey dioceses to have a uniform policy. Under this new policy, the Office of Victims Assistance was established and a unified system of reporting was put into place.

Recognizing the value of cooperation and communication with civil authorities, a *Memorandum of Understanding* has been entered into with the County Prosecutors in all four counties of the Diocese of Trenton. This document obligates the diocese to report acts of sexual abuse when there is reasonable cause to believe that such abuse has taken place. A copy of this document has been filed with the Attorney General of New Jersey and can be downloaded on the Diocese of Trenton website. Under this Abuse Policy and the Memorandum

of Understanding, all complaints of sexual abuse will be forwarded to the civil authorities.

How to report a complaint of sexual abuse

Complaints of sexual abuse may be reported in any of the following ways:

- A telephone call to the Diocesan Response Officer, Monsignor Joseph Rosie, 609-406-7400 x5595 or Cell number: _____
- Email to confidential address : _____
- Letter addressed to: Rev. Msgr. Joseph Rosie
Diocesan Response Officer
Diocese of Trenton
701 Lawrenceville Road
P O Box 5147
Trenton, NJ 08638-0147

How are complaints handled?

Whether the victim is an adult or a minor, all complaints of sexual abuse are to be forwarded to the Diocesan Response Officer. This contact information is shown above, published on the diocesan website, and available at every parish and school in the Diocese

What happens next?

The Diocesan Response Officer forwards all complaints to the Diocesan Liaison to the Prosecutors' Offices, the Victim Assistance Coordinators, the Review Board Coordinator and the Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton. The liaison will forward any complaint of sexual abuse to the prosecuting authorities and, where required, to New Jersey's Department of Youth and Family Services.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator, Msgr. Walter Nolan, will arrange for the immediate care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused. The Associate Victim Assistance Coordinator, Maureen Fitzsimmons, will maintain records and coordinate and monitor follow-up care.

The Diocesan Review Board Coordinator will schedule a meeting of the Diocesan Review Board to review the complaint and consult with the Bishop regarding the preliminary investigation of the accusation.

If the act of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is admitted, or it is established after an appropriate process, the offender will be removed from ministry.