

2004 Audit Executive Summary

October 18 – 22, 2004

Diocese of Palm Beach
Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito
(Previous Audit Conducted 09/22-09/26/2003)

The information found herein represents conditions as they were found to exist during the week of 10/18-10/22/2004.

Findings

To Promote Healing and Reconciliation (Articles 1, 2 and 3)

The Diocese has a policy on the prevention of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. The Diocese provides outreach designed to offer pastoral care to victims/survivors and their families. The Bishop or his representative has met with, or offered to meet with all victims/survivors who have reported allegations of abuse since the last compliance audit. While there have been no incidents of sexual abuse by the clergy during this audit period, diocesan policy provides for the Bishop or his delegate to direct outreach to all faith communities in which sexual abuse may occur. The Diocese has a mechanism in place to respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor occurred.

The Diocese has a victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Terry Fretterd, who holds a Masters degree in Counseling and has extensive experience in counseling and conducting crisis counseling workshops. The Diocese established in September, 2002 a Review Board which consists of ten members. The members include a priest, a psychiatrist, an attorney, a retired school administrator, a crime laboratory supervisor, a public relations expert, a business owner, a physician, a rabbi and a supervisor of child protective investigations for the Sheriff's Office. The Board serves as a confidential consultative body to the Bishop.

The procedures for making a complaint of abuse are readily available in printed form, and are the subject of periodic public announcements. The Diocese has not entered into any confidentiality agreements during the audit period.

To Guarantee Effective Response to Allegations of Abuse of a Minor (Articles 4, 5, 6 and 7)

The Diocese has had no allegations of sexual abuse of a minor since the last compliance audit, but diocesan policy provides that should an allegation be made, there will be immediate reporting to public authorities. The Diocese complies with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities. The Diocese has established effective liaison with civil authorities, ensuring that an open dialogue regarding sexual abuse allegations will occur. The Diocese cooperates with public authorities about

reporting in cases when the person is no longer a minor. In all instances, the Diocese advises victims/survivors of their right to report allegations of abuse by a member of the clergy to civil authorities.

While no allegations of sexual abuse by a member of Diocese of Palm Beach clergy were received since the last audit, diocesan policy provides that when an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation, in harmony with canon law, will be initiated. If a preliminary investigation so indicates, policy calls for the Diocese to notify the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and to apply the precautionary measures mentioned in CIC, canon 1722, or CCEO, canon 1473. Policy provides that should accusations against a priest or a deacon be proven to be unfounded, the Diocese would take steps to restore the good name of the priest or deacon.

Diocesan policy provides that when sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or a deacon is admitted or established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be permanently removed from ministry. The Diocese offers professional assistance to offending priests or deacons.

Diocesan policy provides that in every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law will be observed. Accused clergy are to be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Diocese would supply canonical counsel to a priest or deacon.

Policy provides that if the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied, the Diocese will direct the offender to lead a life of prayer and penance. Policy also provides that an offender will not be allowed to celebrate Mass publicly, to administer the sacraments, or to present himself publicly as a priest.

The Diocese has established clear and well-publicized standards of ministerial behavior for priests and deacons. A communications policy is in effect that reflects the Bishop's pledge to be open and transparent on issues regarding the sexual abuse of children. The Diocese does assist and support all parish communities directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving minors.

To Protect the Faithful in the Future (Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17)

The Diocese has fully implemented a "safe environment" education program. The educational program for children is "Touching Safety"; the educational program for parents is "Protecting God's Children for Parents and Guardians"; the educational program for ministers; educators and others is "Protecting God's Children for Adults". The Diocese has clear and well publicized standards of conduct for persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse. The Diocese conducts background evaluations for all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors, using appropriate law enforcement resources where permissible. The Diocese employs adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination.

The Diocese has not transferred any priest or deacon who has had a credible allegation of sexual abuse made against him to another ministerial assignment since the last audit. The Diocese has not transferred any priest or deacon who has had a credible allegation of sexual abuse made against him to another diocese for residence since the last audit.

The Bishop, or his designee, has coordinated with major superiors of men with a presence in the Diocese concerning addressing the issue of allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. The Diocese has not had the opportunity to participate in research with other institutions in the area of sexual abuse. The Diocese has developed a systematic ongoing formation program in keeping with the *Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*.

Compliance with the Provisions of the Charter

At the conclusion of this compliance audit, the Diocese was found to be compliant with all articles of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.