



## **Annual Report**

### **Child Protection Advisory Board for the Archdiocese of Washington**

### **July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006**

#### **Introduction**

Established in July 2002, the Child Protection Advisory Board of the Archdiocese of Washington is composed primarily of lay people who have particular experience or expertise related to the protection of children and young people. The Board is tasked with reviewing, strengthening and monitoring all Archdiocesan child protection efforts.

The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written Child Protection Policy since 1986; this Policy has been updated several times since that time. The current policy, developed by the Child Protection Advisory Board in 2003, includes a number of accountability measures. One of these is an annual report to parishioners “on the status of Archdiocesan child protection activities.” (*Archdiocese of Washington Child Protection Policy, Sec. 11.8*).

This third annual report summarizes the Archdiocese of Washington’s implementation of its Child Protection Policy, including training, prevention and outreach from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006.

#### **Summary of Policy**

The revised Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington requires employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children to:

- Complete an employment/volunteer application
- Acknowledge in writing the receipt and review of the policy
- Be fingerprinted and complete a Criminal History Record Check
- Attend education on the prevention, recognition and reporting of child abuse.

The revised policy also established the position of Director of Child Protection Services, who is to receive notification of all allegations of abuse and to serve as the liaison with any person who alleges abuse, mandated reporting suspected abuse, immediate removal from ministry and age-appropriate safe environment education for children. A Case Review Board is consulted when an allegation is made against a member of the clergy.

#### **Fingerprinting and Background Checks**

The Archdiocese of Washington has mandated fingerprinting and background checks for many years. In 2002, the Archdiocese became the first diocese in the nation to purchase and use state-of-the-art technology for scanning fingerprints. Fingerprinting also became centralized, to better manage

compliance and is managed by the Office for Employee and Volunteer Services. Between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006:

- 4,909 employees, volunteers and clergy were fingerprinted
- Two background checks were conducted on each person (FBI and Maryland State), generating 9,818 reports

Fingerprinting services were offered on a regular schedule at three sites throughout the Archdiocese, including the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Hyattsville and parishes in Southern Maryland and upper Montgomery County to make this process as convenient as possible for employees and volunteers.

## Education

**Adult Education.** The Archdiocese, under the direction of the Director of Child Protection Services, continued to provide child abuse awareness and prevention education through *Protecting God's Children for Adults*, a nationally recognized program developed by National Catholic Risk Retention Group:

- 77 safe environment training sessions, including four in Spanish, were held between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006
- 4,700 individuals, including volunteers, new employees and clergy, attended these sessions.

**Child Education.** The Archdiocese, under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools and the Director of Religious Education, continued to provide safe environment education for the children in Archdiocesan schools and religious education programs.

During the 2005-2006 school year, 21,296 Catholic school students received safe environment education. Also this year, the Catholic Schools Office began to replace the stand-alone program that had been used in 2004-2005, *Child Lures*, with Personal Safety Education standards that were a component of the health curriculum and integrated with the schools' overall curriculum standards.

In January 2006, all schools received instruction on the integration of the standards and supplemental curriculum materials. In February 2006, parents of all students in Archdiocesan schools received a letter from the Superintendent of Catholic Schools outlining the implementation of the safe environment program. Schools also held parent meetings to share information with families regarding the implementation of the curriculum and to review the specific material that would be introduced. At the close of the school year, schools provided feedback to the Catholic Schools Office on how the program was implemented, including specifics about parental notification, dates programs were held and attendance.

Students not attending Catholic schools, but enrolled in religious education programs typically attend class once per week during the school year, for a total of 30 hours per year. Many of the students already are receiving safe environment education in their non-Catholic schools. In light of the limited time spent in class and the participation in other safe environment programs, the Archdiocesan director of religious education developed a different approach than the schools, creating an age-appropriate Curriculum Guide, first introduced in 2004-2005 in all religious education programs. In addition, most of the catechetical textbooks used by parishes included the primary themes underlying safe environment education.

Following the 2005-2006 school year, 40 parishes provided documentation indicating safe environment education had been provided during the year to 6,000 religious education students in those parishes. Challenges were identified in implementation and monitoring of the program, including the process for supplying the data, and feedback that the Guide was difficult to implement within the curriculum. The retirement of the Archdiocesan director of the office in June 2006 also had an impact.

Under a new director, the Archdiocesan Office of Religious Education will review and revise the material in light of the feedback received this year and institute new reporting systems to ensure accurate tracking of the number of children who receive safe environment education in the religious education programs.

## **Child Abuse Allegations**

Archdiocesan personnel report suspected abuse to civil authorities. Allegations from persons reporting past abuse are either received directly by or directed to the Office of Child Protection Services.

**Allegations against clergy.** No allegations were received against any member of the clergy in ministry. Seven allegations, including several where credibility could not be established, were received against Archdiocesan clergy who were deceased or long out of ministry:

- Three involving two former priests, one of whom had been convicted previously; the other was charged as a result of the allegations received this year
- Three against deceased priests, including allegations by siblings involving a relative
- One against a priest out of ministry; credibility could not be determined because the person making the allegation did not provide adequate information.

All of these allegations were reported to the authorities.

**Allegations against lay employees and contract workers.** Allegations of inappropriate behavior against two school employees were reported to the authorities. The authorities found one allegation not credible. The other involved inappropriate behavior and the employee is no longer employed by the school; however, the behavior did not rise to the level of sexual abuse.

## **Financial Resources for Child Protection Efforts**

Approximately \$352,000 was spent on implementing and complying with the Child Protection Policy in the fiscal year of July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006. This included salaries and benefits for the Office of Child Protection Services and the Office of Employee and Volunteer Services, materials, training stipends, fingerprinting and other equipment purchases and maintenance, and professional fees for the training program. An additional \$117,594 was spent on counseling for victims.

## **Child Protection Policy Compliance Committee**

The Archdiocese established a broad-based committee in January 2006 to develop a more effective system for parishes and other locations to monitor compliance with the Child Protection Policy. The existing process included maintaining two separate databases and providing hard-copy reports to the parishes.

After analyzing alternative approaches, the Archdiocese of Washington became a partner with the provider of the Archdiocese's adult safe environment training, *Protecting God's Children for Adults*, to develop an online compliance tracking system.

The system allows parishes and schools to check, via a secure website, employee/volunteer compliance, including fingerprinting, receipt of the Child Protection Policy, receipt of an application form and completion of adult education. A pilot program involving nine parishes and schools from throughout the Archdiocese began on May 25, 2006. The goal is to implement the system Archdiocese-wide by Spring 2007.

## **National Audit**

In November 2005 an audit of the Archdiocese's child protection efforts was conducted by former FBI agents as part of a national review of diocesan compliance with the US Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. For the third straight year, the Archdiocese of Washington was found in full compliance.

## **Communications**

Regular announcements were sent to parishes regarding compliance with the *Child Protection Policy*, particularly education programs. The Archdiocesan website, [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org), included a banner on the home page, "Protecting Our Children," and a special section with the Child Protection Policy, information on background checks, registration for adult safe environment training, a contact number to report any allegations and other information.

After criminal charges were placed against a former priest for an allegation of abuse that occurred 26 years ago, a letter from the Archbishop was sent to all priests, principals, parishes and other staff in the Archdiocese. The letter provided information about the allegation and urged anyone with information to come forward. This letter was read at all Masses and placed in the bulletin of the parish where the man had served during the time period involved in the allegation. Archdiocesan staff were present at those Masses to assist parishioners and information about the charges was published in the *Catholic Standard* and other media.

## **Child Protection Advisory Board**

The Child Protection Advisory Board recognizes the leadership of its first chairman, Mr. Shay Bilchik, who stepped down in April 2006 after nearly four years of volunteer service. Judge Dennis McHugh, a member of the Board since its inception in 2002, was named the new chairman.

## **Conclusion and Direction for the Future**

Compliance with the Child Protection Policy continues to be a priority for the Archdiocese. Three areas of focus for the next year are complete implementation of the online compliance tracking system, more standardized reporting for all youth safe environment training and review and revision of the curriculum used in religious education programs.