



## **Annual Report from the Child Protection Advisory Board July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016**

This year has been a busy one for the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Office. The office continues to make strides in developing proactive and innovative initiatives to educate and empower the communities it serves.

The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written Child Protection Policy for more than 30 years and recently enhanced its safe environment training department by creating and posting an online video series, "Focus on the Child." This free series is available to the general public as part of the archdiocese's commitment to supporting child safety beyond our parishes and schools. The Archdiocese of Washington's child protection office continues to conduct rigorous background checks on individuals who have substantial contact with children. The archdiocese continues to lead the way in child protection by being one of the first dioceses to implement a written policy, regularly provide education on child safety and require fingerprinting and electronic criminal background checks of employees. Today crucial and relevant information regarding the Child Protection Policy, as well as best practices, is available online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).

An Archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board of lay experts (including at least one victim-survivor) monitors the archdiocese's outreach and compliance with the Child Protection Policy. This hands-on board consults with the Office of Child Protection on a regular basis, offering expertise and recommendations. In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops audits the Archdiocese of Washington on its compliance with the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The auditors, from a third-party independent organization, conduct interviews with archdiocesan staff and review records relating to education, background checks, compliance monitoring, reporting and healing. The archdiocese has been found in full compliance with the audit every year, including this reporting year of 2015-2016, when the audit was conducted on site.

One of the most vital parts of the Child Protection Policy is accountability. Each year, the archdiocesan Director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection compiles a report for the Vicar General to present to the Child Protection Advisory Board. The Child Protection Advisory Board reviews the annual report, recommends modifications if required, then approves and circulates the annual report.

## **EDUCATION**

The Archdiocese of Washington embraces its opportunity to teach those in its communities that all children deserve to be safe and protected in all environments – home, school, religious institutions, and communities. The Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy mandates child-abuse awareness and prevention education to all adults who have substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults, as well as safe environment education for all youth. It is essential that all adults are well-trained so they are equipped to identify signs and symptoms of possible abuse. Additionally, adults working with children are trained on appropriate boundaries when working with children.

**Adult Education.** The program used by the Archdiocese of Washington, *Protecting God's Children*, is nationally recognized and was developed by National Catholic Risk Retention Group/Virtus. Twenty-two (22) Virtus-trained facilitators, including several who are bilingual in English and Spanish, led this year's education sessions. Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016:

- 103 Protecting God's Children training sessions, including 12 sessions in Spanish, were held at various locations throughout the archdiocese.
- 4,011 individuals, including volunteers, new employees and clergy, were trained.

**Child Education.** The archdiocese, under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools and the Director of Catechesis, continued to provide safe-environment education for the children in archdiocesan Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. The Catholic Schools Office and the Office of Catechesis used materials developed by Virtus, the same company that provides the adult education materials. For the 2015-16 school year:

- 13,581 Catholic school students and 22,110 children in parish religious education programs received safe environment education.

## **FINGERPRINTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS**

The Archdiocese recognizes that background checks are a crucial element in ensuring the safety of children and helping to protect them from the inappropriate actions or behaviors of others. All clergy, employees and volunteers who will have substantial contact with minors while working or volunteering are required to undergo state and federal criminal history record checks before they begin working or volunteering with minors.

In an effort to make background check sites more accessible, fingerprinting services are offered on a regular schedule at three sites, including the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Hyattsville, and parishes in Southern Maryland and upper Montgomery County.

Since 2002 fingerprinting has been done through state-of-the art scanning via Live Scan equipment at three archdiocesan locations throughout the Archdiocese of Washington. Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016:

- 675 employees, religious, seminarians and clergy were fingerprinted
- 4,306 electronic background checks were conducted on employees, clergy, and volunteers including: federal, state, district federal, and county record checks,
- Re-checks were performed on a monthly basis.

The Child Protection Office would like to express gratitude to the St. John's Hollywood community for hosting the Southern Maryland fingerprinting location for the past five years. St.

Peter's in Waldorf has graciously accepted the responsibility of being the new Southern Maryland fingerprinting location.

Based on a pilot project that concluded in April 2014, the Child Protection Advisory Board supported the recommendation that volunteers receive electronic background checks instead of fingerprinting. Such a change was considered to not only maintain a thorough screening, but to also provide more efficient and timely results. In compliance with local regulations, all employees, religious, seminarians and clergy of the archdiocese who have substantial contact with children are still required to undergo both an electronic background check and a fingerprint background check. Currently, all volunteers must complete an electronic background check and employees, educators, religious, seminarians and clergy must complete both fingerprinting and an electronic background check.

### **CHILD-ABUSE ALLEGATIONS**

The archdiocese is committed to working with law enforcement and civil authorities to protect children by preventing child abuse and neglect, reporting alleged incidents of abuse or neglect, cooperating in investigations of allegations, as well as advising victims of their right to report independently and supporting their exercise of that right. Archdiocesan policy requires all archdiocesan personnel to report any suspected abuse to civil authorities. Reporting requirements, both civil and internal, are described in the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Policy, which is available as a handbook and online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).

The Office of Child and Youth Protection continues to assist the community in these reporting obligations as well as to offer guidance on navigating the reporting process. Staff can be contacted by telephone, email or fax 24 hours a day, to receive allegations of current or past suspected abuse, and to report such allegations to civil authorities. Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016:

#### **Allegations against archdiocesan clergy in this reporting period.**

There were no allegations of abuse made against any archdiocesan clergy this year.

#### **Allegations against lay employees, contract workers and others in this reporting period.**

- There was one allegation of inappropriate sexual conduct made against a parish employee whose work did not involve children. When the allegation was reported to the parish, law enforcement was immediately notified and the employee was placed on administrative leave. The Office of Child Protection worked with the parish staff and cooperated fully with law enforcement to ensure a thorough investigation occurred. The employee was terminated from the parish.

### **FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR CHILD-PROTECTION EFFORTS**

Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016, \$289,775 was spent on implementing and complying with the Child Protection Policy. This included salaries and benefits for the Office of Child and Youth Protection 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 \$82,457 was spent on counseling and other assistance for victims.

## **CHILD-PROTECTION POLICY COMPLIANCE**

To ensure that all clergy, employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children are in compliance with archdiocesan child protection requirements, the archdiocese requires each parish and school designate a child protection compliance coordinator. The coordinator maintains compliance records for the parish/school location so only those who are fully compliant may work or volunteer with children. Coordinators have immediate online access to compliance information for their location.

This process for monitoring compliance has been in place for seven years and is periodically reviewed and adjusted when appropriate. During the reporting period, there were four group or individual trainings held for 23 new coordinators.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Archdiocese of Washington's Secretariat for Communications maintains regular contact with parishes and schools on child protection matters. Information about the archdiocesan policies and procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy continues to be available through the various channels of communication, such as the archdiocesan newspapers and the archdiocesan website for use in church bulletins, as well as priest/parish/school newsletters and parish websites. Additionally, the online supplemental training series "Focus on the Child" was launched on the archdiocese website. This powerful safe environment training resource's primary objective is to educate the broader community regardless of religious affiliation about identifying signs and symptoms of child abuse and how to properly and appropriately report possible child abuse.

On the archdiocesan website under the Child Protection tab, several resources are available, including parent resources about the archdiocesan Child Protection Policy, safety tips for parents, as well as information about internet safety, cyber bullying, sexting, a "kid's guide" to bullying, and healthy teen relationships. The archdiocesan website also includes other important resources to help protect children and create safe environments.

## **CONCLUSION AND DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE**

Over this past year, the archdiocesan staff continued to focus on implementation of the policy, training of compliance coordinators and helping to ensure that school and parish leaders know what steps to take if they suspect abuse. In addition, the archdiocese continued its efforts to raise broad awareness of child safety.

The Office of Child Protection focuses on two essential factors in protecting all of God's children: education and empowerment. The office continues to introduce proactive measures which will educate the community and therefore empower individuals to keep children safe. The office has developed child-abuse prevention presentations for various groups in the community to provide a comprehensive understanding of when and how to report abuse to the civil authorities and law enforcement.

Additionally, the office has engaged the director of digital media for the Archdiocese of Washington to create an on-site presentation focusing on the dangers of social media and positive ways to work with children to set healthy boundaries for social media. Presentations

have been given to students and parents throughout the Archdiocese of Washington and the response has been positive.

The Child Protection team remains committed to developing effective and proactive ways to empower the community in its perpetual the fight against child abuse prevention.

### **NATIONAL AUDIT**

As stated previously, for this reporting period of 2015-2016, the Archdiocese of Washington was once again found in compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, enacted by the U.S. bishops in 2002. The archdiocese has been found in compliance every year since the audits were initiated.

#### **Members of the Child Protection Advisory Board:**

- Eileen Dombo, Ph.D., LICSW, Chair
- Rev. Msgr. William English
- Susan Gibbs
- Anne Hoffman, LCSW-C
- J. Thomas Manger
- Michael Nugent