Annual Report from the Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection Advisory Board

For July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

(continued)

The Archdiocese of Washington 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, religious, seminarians, employees, and volunteers who will have 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.

Since 2002, fingerprinting has been done through state-of-the-art scanning using LiveScan equipment at two archdiocesan offices.

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and volunteers to report any suspected abuse to civil authorities. Reporting requirements, both civil and internal, are described in the Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy, which is available as a handbook and online at www.adw.org.

The Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment works within the community 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, 2018 and June 30, 2019:

- Allegations against archdiocesan clergy in this reporting period:

The Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection & Safe Environment office received 15 allegations of sexual abuse during the 2018-2019 audit year. There were 14 reports of historic child sexual abuse and one report involving a current allegation of child sexual abuse. In August 2019, Father Urbano Vasquez was found guilty of child sexual abuse and is serving jail time for his crime. All allegations were immediately reported to law enforcement and therapeutic support was offered to all survivors and victims.

- Allegations against lay employees, contract workers and others in this reporting period:

There were no allegations of sexual abuse made against any lay employees, contract workers or vendors during this year.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019, the Archdiocese of Washington invested $316,072 in child protection efforts. This included implementing the child protection policy and providing appropriate resources to community members pertaining to this essential initiative. Additionally, this amount included salaries and benefits for the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment 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 $73,340 was allocated towards therapeutic services and other assistance for victims and survivors.

To ensure that all clergy, religious, seminarians, employees, and volunteers who have contact with children and vulnerable adults are compliant with archdiocesan child protection and safe environment 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 and vulnerable. Coordinators have immediate online access to compliance information for their location. Child Protection Coordinators are managed and supported by the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Archdiocese of Washington’s website contains information about the policies and procedures outlined in the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy. Child Protection information continues to be available through the archdiocesan newspapers, church bulletins, priest/parish/school newsletters, as well as on parish websites. The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment’s online supplemental training series “Focus on the Child” continues to be a valuable training resource for community members. This seven-video safe environment training resource provides fundamental information that educates and empowers the broader community. Because of its easy online access, anyone can learn about identifying signs and symptoms of child abuse and how to report suspected abuse to civil authorities. A top priority for the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment is to provide vital information on child safety to the broader community regardless of religious affiliation.

On the archdiocesan website under the Child Protection tab, several resources are available, including parent resources about the Archdiocesan Child Protection & Safe Environment 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 provide guidance on creating and maintaining safe environments.

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

The Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment continues to focus on educating the community on the practices and protocols of Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy. Additionally, the office constantly works to offer support and guidance to survivors and victims who seek healing and empowerment. Team members continually work with parishes and schools to implement the strict application of the policy. In order to better serve the Archdiocese of Washington’s community, the structure of the office was expanded to include the intake of allegations of adult misconduct or assault of those in archdiocesan ministry, including Bishops. The Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment’s top priority is the safety and well-being of all members of the Archdiocese of Washington.

NATIONAL AUDIT

As stated previously, for this reporting period of 2018-2019, the Archdiocese of Washington was once again found in compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ 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 Dombio, Ph.D., LICSW, Chair
- Rev. Msgr. William English
- Anne Hoffman, LCSW-C
- J. Thomas Manger
- Michael Nugent