



CHILD PROTECTION & SAFE ENVIRONMENT

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHILD PROTECTION ADVISORY BOARD

July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020

The Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection & Safe Environment office continues to expand its mission to create and implement effective programs and initiatives to educate and empower community members on the issues of child protection and safe environment. During this unprecedented pandemic, the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment's priority is to provide the most current information to ensure the safety and well-being of all community members while in the presence of the Catholic faith and values. The Child Protection and Safe Environment team works diligently to adjust compliance requirements while people remain home. Some important aspects of the office:

- The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written Child Protection Policy for more than 30 years.
- The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment handles both allegations and reports of child abuse as well as adult misconduct.
- The Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection & Safe Environment office continues to conduct thorough criminal background checks on individuals who have contact with children. During the pandemic, community members have the opportunity to meet with the Records Management office to complete criminal background checks. This new practice requires an individual to meet virtually one-on-one with the records coordinator.
- All employees, religious, and volunteers who have contact with children in the Archdiocese of Washington are required to complete a safe environment training session. The Child Protection & Safe Environment team developed an interactive, virtual training session where individuals are able to receive this critical training from the safety of their homes.
- The Archdiocese of Washington provides important and current information pertaining to the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy, as well as best practices online at www.adw.org.

- The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment is a 24/7 operation where survivors and victims of abuse or misconduct always have a place to call at 301-853-5328.

One of the most valuable resources in the Archdiocese of Washington is its Advisory Board of lay experts. The board consists of one victim-survivor, a retired chief of police, and experts in child sexual abuse, trauma, and sexual assault. The board actively monitors the archdiocese's outreach and compliance with the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy. This highly involved board consults with the Child Protection & Safe Environment office regularly to offer expertise and recommendations as well as guidance to critical reports made to the office.

In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 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 company conduct interviews with archdiocesan staff and review records of safe environment practices, background checks, compliance monitoring, reporting abuse, adult misconduct, and healing. This audit year was on-site and involved an extremely thorough review of all past records of compliance, background checks, and reports of abuse. The archdiocese has been in full compliance with the audit every year, including this reporting year of 2019-2020.

There are three essential components of the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy: accountability, transparency, and independence. Every year, the Executive Director of Child Protection & Safe Environment compiles a report for the Vicar General of the Archdiocese to present to the Child Protection Advisory Board. The Advisory Board reviews the report, recommends modifications if needed, and approves the report. The final report is widely shared with media outlets and published on the archdiocese's website.

EDUCATION

The Archdiocese of Washington embraces its opportunity to teach community members the importance of keeping children safe and protected in all environments whether at home, school, religious institutions, and communities. The Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy mandates child-abuse awareness and prevention education for all adults who have contact with children or vulnerable adults, as well as age-appropriate safe-environment education for all young people. It is vital that all adults are well trained so they are equipped to identify signs and symptoms of possible abuse, neglect, or assault. During the pandemic, many schools and religious education programs went to virtual learning. All volunteers and employees who worked or participated virtually were required to be compliant with the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy.

Adult Education. Protecting God's Children is the safe environment training program implemented by the Archdiocese of Washington. The program is nationally recognized and was developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group/Virtus. Twenty (20) Virtus-trained facilitators, including several bilingual in English and Spanish, led this year's training sessions. Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020:

- Seventy-seven (77) Protecting God's Children training sessions, including twenty-two (22) sessions in Spanish, were held at various locations throughout the archdiocese. 3,281 individuals, including volunteers, new employees, religious, seminarians, 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 materials. For the 2019-2020 school year:

- 35,458 Catholic school students and children in parish religious education programs received safe environment education.

FINGERPRINTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

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 Live Scan equipment at two archdiocesan locations. All fingerprints are sent to the State and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for review and alerts are sent to the Archdiocese of Washington:

- 9,119 employees, religious, seminarians, clergy and volunteers were fingerprinted.
- 159 electronic background checks were conducted on clergy, religious, employees, seminarians, and volunteers including: federal, state, district federal, and county record checks. These background checks were performed from April 2019 through June 2020.
- The FBI sends an alert to the Archdiocese of Washington within 24 hours if an individual has been arrested or charged with a crime.

Effective July 1, 2019, the archdiocese requires fingerprinting for all volunteers, employees, clergy, religious, and seminarians who have contact with children. However, due to Covid-19, the Archdiocese permitted individuals to complete electronic background checks with the understanding that when businesses open up, fingerprinting will be required.

CHILD-ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

The Archdiocese of Washington works 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 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, 2019 and June 30, 2020:

- *Allegations against archdiocesan clergy in this reporting period:*

The Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection & Safe Environment office received eight allegations of sexual abuse during the 2019-2020 audit year. All eight were reports of historic child sexual abuse. All allegations were immediately reported to law enforcement and therapeutic support was offered to all survivors and victims as well as family members.

- *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, 2019 and June 30, 2020, the Archdiocese of Washington invested \$394,752 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 \$63,515 was expended 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 the 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. When the pandemic caused locations to shutdown, coordinators worked very hard at home to monitor and maintain safe environment records. Additionally, coordinators helped support new safe environment modifications so members of the community to safely participate in parish and school activities while being at home.

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. The 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. Having this series available online proved to be a critical resource when people were at home. A top priority for the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment is to provide vital information on child safety to the boarder 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.

The Child Protection & Safe Environment office relied heavily on the Archdiocese of Washington's Communications office this year for getting our initiatives out to the community while people were home. Masses dedicated to victims and survivors were live-streamed and Cardinal Gregory offered Mass for victims, survivors and family members affected by child sexual abuse.

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

The Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment's continued mission is educate and empower the community on expelling child sexual abuse and neglect. Through the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection & Safe Environment policy, practices and protocols are explicitly outlined and offer step-by-step guidance on reporting suspected abuse. Additionally, the office is open 24 hours to support victims and survivors by offering a place to begin the healing process through compassion and empowerment. Team members work with parishes and schools to ensure that policies and protocols are being appropriately implemented. 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 sexual misconduct or assault of those in archdiocesan ministry, including Bishops.

This year presented many challenges for all and the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment recognizes the tireless effort of community members in joining the fight against child sexual abuse and neglect. 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

This reporting period of 2019-2020, the Archdiocese of Washington was determined to be in full 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 compliant every year since the audits were initiated.

Members of the Child Protection Advisory Board:

- Eileen Dombo, Ph.D., LICSW, Chair
- Anne Hoffman, LCSW-C
- Thomas Manger
- Fr. Evelio Menjivar
- Michael Nugent
- Chandrai Jackson-Sanders, M.Ed
- Judge Karla Smith