



# The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington

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## **Annual Report from the Child Protection & Safe Environment Advisory Board July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022**

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment had a strong year implementing effective programs and initiatives to educate and empower community members on the issues of child protection and safe environment. Some important aspects of the office:

- The Roman Catholic 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 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection & Safe Environment office conducts thorough criminal background checks on all individuals who have contact with children. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, individuals wanting to serve as employees or volunteers had the opportunity to meet with the Records Management office to complete criminal background checks. This practice requires individuals to meet virtually one-on-one with the records coordinator.
- All employees, religious, and volunteers who have contact with children in The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington must complete a safe environment training session. The Child Protection & Safe Environment team offers an interactive virtual training session where individuals are able to receive this critical training from the safety of their homes or offices. This online course will continue throughout the year due to the high demand and positive feedback.
- The Roman Catholic 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](http://www.adw.org).
- The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment is a 24/7 operation where survivors and victims of abuse or misconduct can reach out and obtain support. We believe this critical support and guidance must be provided in real time.

One of the most valuable resources in The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington is its Advisory Board. The board consists of one victim-survivor, a chief of police, a member of the clergy, and experts in child sexual abuse, trauma, and sexual assault. This committed group of

experts work to ensure a safe environment exists for all people. The board actively reviews the Archdiocese's programs and schools to ensure all are in compliance with the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy. The Advisory Board is responsible for offering recommendations as well as guidance on critical reports made to the office.

In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) audits The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington on its compliance with the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. 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. The audit review is on-site and involves an extremely thorough review of all past records of compliance, background checks, and reports of abuse. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington has been in full compliance with the audit every year since it began, including the 2021-2022 audit year.

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 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington website.

## **EDUCATION**

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington embraces the opportunity to teach all community members about the importance of keeping children safe and protected in all environments – at homes, schools, 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. Adults working with children are appropriately trained to identify signs and symptoms of possible abuse, neglect, or assault, and make appropriate reports. All volunteers and employees who work with minors are required to be compliant with the Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy. Additionally, all volunteers, employees, and religious are mandated reporters under this important policy.

**Adult Education.** *Protecting God's Children* is the safe environment training program implemented by The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington. This nationally recognized program was developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group/Virtus. The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment team has proudly added supplementary training for community members. *Identifying and Responding to Child Abuse in a Virtual World* was hosted by Prince George's County Child Welfare Services throughout the year to help support families dealing with the dangers of social media and the internet.

Between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022:

- Ninety-one (91) *Protecting God's Children* training sessions, including nineteen (19) sessions in Spanish, were conducted via live online interactive sessions. Nine hundred twenty-five (925) individuals, including lay volunteers and 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 training for adults. For the 2021-2022 school year:

- In total, 25,799 Catholic school students and children in parish religious education programs received safe environment education.

## **FINGERPRINTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS**

The Roman Catholic 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 may 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.

Fingerprint results are sent to the State and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for review and alerts are sent to The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington:

- 3,153 new employees, religious, seminarians, clergy and volunteers were fingerprinted.
- 383 electronic background checks were conducted on clergy, religious, employees, seminarians, and volunteers, including federal, state, district federal, and county record checks.
- The FBI sends an alert to The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington within 24 hours if an individual has been arrested or charged with a crime. All individuals who are fingerprinted remain in the FBI database for continual monitoring.

## **CHILD-ABUSE ALLEGATIONS**

The Roman Catholic 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 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy*, which is available as a handbook and online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).

The Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment works within the community reporting obligations, and offers guidance on navigating the reporting process. Staff can be reached to hear allegations of current or past suspected abuse, and to report such allegations to civil authorities, by telephone, email, or fax 24 hours a day. Between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022:

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

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection & Safe Environment office received three allegations of sexual abuse during the 2021-2022 audit year. All three were reports of historic child sexual abuse. The 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 was one allegation of sexual abuse made against a lay employee during the audit year. The allegation was immediately reported to the civil authorities and the Advisory Board. The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment fully cooperated with law enforcement throughout their investigation.

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

Between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022, The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington paid \$373,549 in child protection and safe environment efforts. This included implementing the child protection policy and providing appropriate resources to community members. Additionally, this amount included salaries and benefits for the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment and the Office of Employee and Volunteer Services, materials, fingerprinting and other equipment purchases and maintenance, and professional fees for the training program. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington paid \$75,000 in settlements to survivors of sexual abuse. An additional \$50,480 was spent on 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 Child Protection and Safe Environment requirements, the Archdiocese requires that 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. Child Protection coordinators worked tirelessly through the pandemic by offering flexible hours to accommodate community members become or remain compliant. They worked from remote locations at times to monitor and maintain safe environment records. Additionally, coordinators helped support new safe environment modifications so members of the community could safely participate in parish and school activities either from home or modified locations.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment understands the importance of outreach

to the community. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's Communications Department robustly supports our mission of child protection & safe environment. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington 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 in English and Spanish, archdiocesan and parish social media, church bulletins, priest/parish/school newsletters, texts, and email, 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. The easy online access allows anyone to 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 during pandemic-required quarantine. The primary objective of the Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment is to provide vital information on child safety to the broader community regardless of religious affiliation.

The Child Protection & Safe Environment Annual Report is published each year in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's *Catholic Standard* and *El Pregonero*. Additionally, the report is posted on the archdiocesan website.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington website, [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org), has several resources available under the Child Protection tab, including information about the Archdiocesan Child Protection & Safe Environment Policy and safety tips for parents regarding internet safety, cyber bullying, and sexting. It also offers "kid's guides" to bullying and healthy teen relationships. The archdiocesan website includes other important resources to help protect children and provide guidance on creating and maintaining safe environments.

Cardinal Wilton Gregory remains committed to all Child Protection & Safe Environment initiatives and programs. One of the most important events for Cardinal Gregory annually is his special Mass dedicated to victims, survivors, and their families in April during Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Month. The Cardinal offered this Mass at Our Lady of Mercy Parish and it was live-streamed so all members of the community could pray together for all affected.

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

The Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment's primary objective is to educate and empower the community on ending child sexual abuse and neglect once and for all. Through The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington Child Protection & Safe Environment policy, practices and protocols are extensively outlined and step-by-step guidance is offered on reporting suspected abuse. Additionally, the office is open 24 hours a day 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 followed.

To serve The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington community better, the office was expanded to include intake of allegations of adult sexual misconduct or assault by bishops and others in archdiocesan ministry. To report an incident of sexual abuse and related misconduct by a bishop, please contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org) or call (800) 276-1562.

## **NATIONAL AUDIT**

During the reporting period of 2021-2022, The Roman Catholic 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 to be fully compliant every year since the audits were initiated.

### **Members of the Child Protection & Safe Environment Advisory Board:**

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