

# Ten Things to Know about The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's *Safe Environment Policy*

The Archdiocese of Washington has long been committed to providing a safe environment for everyone served by our ministries, especially all minors and vulnerable adults entrusted to our care. Here are ten things to know about our updated *Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults*:

- 1. The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written *Policy* in place since 1986.** Our *Policy* was one of the first adopted nationwide, and it has been regularly reviewed and updated, most recently in 2024.
- 2. The updated *Safe Environment Policy* published in 2024 is organized into five sections that correspond to the five pillars that are the foundation of our safe environment efforts.** Our *Policy* implements a comprehensive safe environment program (Section I); prioritizes care and healing for survivors of abuse and their families (Section II); mandates reporting of suspected abuse (Section III); explains the process for how the Archdiocese responds to allegations (Section IV); and ensures that we maintain trust through accountability and transparency (Section V).
- 3. The Archdiocese's comprehensive safe environment program requires mandatory criminal background checks and training in abuse prevention and awareness.** These requirements, which are found in Section I of the *Policy*, apply to all clergy and seminarians as well as all employees and volunteers who minister to young people and vulnerable adults.
- 4. Our safe environment program also includes an educational component for young people.** Section I of the *Policy* requires annual training and educational programs as part of the curriculum for minors and vulnerable adults who are enrolled in Archdiocesan schools, religious education, and other similar programs.
- 5. Our *Safe Environment Policy* prioritizes our commitment to offering pastoral care and assistance for survivors of abuse and their families.** The Archdiocese maintains a dedicated Office of Safe Environment, as well as a Victim Assistance Coordinator who arranges for appropriate, compassionate, and timely pastoral care for survivors and their families. More information can be found in Section II of the *Policy*.
- 6. Our *Safe Environment Policy* also mandates reporting of all allegations of suspected abuse to both civil authorities consistent with local laws, and to the Archdiocese.** These reporting requirements are explained in Section III of the *Policy*, and additional guidance to assist with mandatory reporting is provided in the Appendices to the *Policy*.
- 7. Our *Safe Environment Policy* prescribes a clear, timely, and just process in response to all allegations.** Section IV of the *Policy* explains the process the Archdiocese follow in responding to allegations made against clergy, employees, and volunteers.
- 8. The Archdiocese has a "zero tolerance" policy for abuse.** Section IV of the *Policy* provides that a single act of sexual abuse by any cleric, employee, or volunteer that is admitted, or established after an appropriate process, will be grounds for permanent removal from ministry.
- 9. The Archdiocese relies upon an advisory board of professionals to assist with its safe environment efforts.** As explained in Section V of the *Policy*, this advisory board, which is comprised mainly of lay people who have relevant expertise, regularly consults with the Archbishop on all aspects of the Archdiocese's safe environment policies and assists the Archbishop when there has been an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult made against a member of the clergy.
- 10. The Archdiocese is committed to accountability and transparency.** The Archdiocese undergoes an annual audit of its safe environment program and publishes an annual report that compiles data and compliance information related to its safe environment program.



The Roman Catholic  
Archdiocese of Washington

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