



The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington

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Annual Report on the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's Safe Environment Program July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington (Archdiocese of Washington) continues to maintain an affective child protection and safe environment program for the 2023-24 audit year. Some important aspects of the Archdiocese of Washington's safe environment program include:

- The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written safe environment policy for nearly 40 years. The Archdiocese of Washington's *Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults* ("Policy") is in place to ensure that all minors and vulnerable adults entrusted to the care of archdiocesan ministries are afforded a safe environment. The Policy requires training and background checks, mandates reporting of all allegations of sexual abuse prescribes a clear process for the prompt and fair handling of allegations and reinforces our commitment to provide pastoral care to survivors and their families.
- During the 2023-24 audit year, this Policy underwent a thorough review, and the updated Policy was published in December 2024. This Policy and other important information and resources about the Archdiocese's safe environment program are published online at www.adw.org.
- The Archdiocese of Washington conducts thorough criminal background checks on all clergy and seminarians and on all employees and volunteers who have contact with minors.
- All clergy and seminarians and all employees and volunteers who have contact with minors in Archdiocese of Washington must complete a safe environment training session.
- The Archdiocese of Washington also provides age-appropriate safe-environment education for all young people enrolled in our schools and religious education programs.
- The Archdiocese of Washington maintains an Office of Child Protection & Safe Environment, with staff available to assist parishes and schools in implementing these safe environment protocols. Each parish also has a child protection coordinator who assists the pastor in maintaining compliance at the local level.
- The Archdiocese of Washington has a dedicated Victim Assistance Coordinator who arranges for counseling and provides pastoral support to survivors who report child sexual abuse and their families.

- The Archdiocese of Washington is assisted in these efforts by an Advisory Board of experts.
- The Archdiocese of Washington's compliance is audited annually by a third-party auditing firm.
- This report is compiled annually, reviewed with the Advisory Board, and published on the Archdiocese of Washington's website.

EDUCATION

The Archdiocese of Washington provides ongoing education to inform all community members about the importance of keeping children safe and protected in all environments – at homes, schools, religious institutions, and communities. The Archdiocese's 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 minors or vulnerable adults 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 or vulnerable adults are required to be compliant with the Policy. Additionally, the Policy mandates that everyone involved in Archdiocesan ministries are mandatory reporters in accordance with the Policy and local law, including all clergy, seminarians, volunteers, employees, and religious.

Adult Education. *Protecting God's Children* is the safe environment training program implemented by the Archdiocese of Washington to implement the training required under the Policy. This nationally recognized program was developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group/Virtus, and it is now available on demand, with close captioning. Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024:

- Fifty-eight (58) *Protecting God's Children* training sessions, including sixteen (16) sessions in Spanish, were conducted via live online interactive sessions. Three Thousand One Hundred twenty (3,120) individuals, including lay volunteers and new employees, religious, seminarians, and clergy were trained.

Child Education. Under the direction of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools and the Secretary of Catechesis, the Archdiocese has continued to provide safe environment education for the children in archdiocesan Catholic schools and parish religious education programs, as required by the Policy. The Catholic Schools Office and the Office of Catechesis used materials developed by Virtus, the same company that provides training for adults. For the 2023-24 school year:

- In total 30,494 Catholic school students and children in parish religious education programs received safe environment education.

FINGERPRINTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

As reflected in the Policy, the Archdiocese of Washington utilizes comprehensive criminal background checks as a crucial element in ensuring the safety of children and preventing abuse. All clergy and seminarians, and all employees, volunteers, and religious 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.

The Archdiocese utilizes a fingerprinting background check, and results are processed through State and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) databases. The Archdiocese is notified of any updates through system alerts that are promptly sent to the Archdiocese's Office of Safe Environment for review. In addition, all clergy and seminarians and all employees who work in schools or child care undergo an additional electronic background check. For the 2023-24 audit year::

- 3,786 new employees, religious, seminarians, clergy and volunteers were fingerprinted.
- 842 electronic background checks were conducted on clergy, religious, employees, seminarians, and volunteers, including federal, state, district federal, and county record checks.
- All individuals who are fingerprinted remain in the FBI database for continual monitoring, and the Archdiocese receives alerts of any record of criminal activity.

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON'S HANDLING OF ALLEGATIONS

The Archdiocese of Washington cooperates with law enforcement and other civil authorities to protect children through its abuse prevention efforts, by reporting all alleged incidents of abuse or neglect, by cooperating in investigations of allegations, and by advising victims of their right to report independently and supporting their exercise of that right. Our Policy requires all archdiocesan clergy and personnel and volunteers to report any suspected abuse of a minor to civil authorities.

- **Allegations of sexual abuse of a minor made against archdiocesan clergy between July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.**

The Archdiocese of Washington received nineteen allegations of sexual abuse during the 2023-24 audit year, all of which were historical allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. Each of these allegations were promptly reported to law enforcement, and therapeutic support was offered, without making any determination about the credibility of the allegation, consistent with the Policy. Three of the nineteen historic allegations involved clergy who are still in active ministry, and sixteen allegations were made against individuals who were either deceased, already removed from ministry, or whose identity was unknown at the time the allegation was received.

In responding to the three allegations involving clergy in active ministry, the Archdiocese cooperated with law enforcement and deferred to the civil authorities to investigate before undertaking its own review of the allegations. With respect to each of the three allegations, law enforcement declined to bring criminal charges, and the Archdiocese undertook a preliminary investigation under Canon Law and consulted with its Advisory Board. At the conclusion of this process, each of the three accused clergy members were returned to active ministry after it was determined that there was no sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations.

- **Allegations of sexual abuse of a minor against religious and lay employees, contract workers, volunteers, and other non-clergy between July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.**

There were three historical allegations of sexual abuse of a minor made against religious and lay employees during the audit year. Each of these allegations were reported to the civil

authorities, and none of the allegations involve individuals who are currently employed by or otherwise in ministry for the Archdiocese.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Between July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, the Archdiocese paid \$415,563 in child protection and safe environment efforts. This included financial support for implementing the Policy and providing appropriate resources to community members. Additionally, this amount included salaries and benefits for the Office of Safe Environment, materials, fingerprinting costs, and other equipment purchases and maintenance, and professional fees for the training program. The Archdiocese also paid \$20,000 in settlements to survivors of sexual abuse. An additional \$80,007 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 minors and vulnerable adults in our parishes are compliant with the Policy, 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.

NATIONAL AUDIT

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) arranges for an audit of the Archdiocese of Washington on its compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter)*. The audit involves annual data collection and review, as well as an on-site review every three years. Auditors from a third-party auditing firm conduct interviews with archdiocesan staff and review records of safe environment practices, background checks, compliance monitoring, reporting abuse, and resources offered for healing. The Archdiocese of Washington has been in full compliance with the audit every year since it began, including the 2023-24 audit year.

During the reporting period of 2023-24, 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 to be fully compliant every year since the audits were initiated.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Archdiocese of Washington understands the importance of transparency and outreach to the community. The Policy is published in English and Spanish on the Archdiocese of Washington's website, www.adw.org, along with other information about the policies and procedures outlined in the Policy. The Archdiocese also shares information about its safe environment efforts through archdiocesan newspapers (in English and Spanish), archdiocesan and parish social media, church bulletins, priest/parish/school newsletters, other updates to clergy and personnel, as well as on parish websites.

The Child Protection & Safe Environment Annual Report is published each year in English and Spanish in the *Catholic Standard* and *El Pregonero*. Additionally, the report is posted on the archdiocesan website.

The Archdiocese of Washington's website, www.adw.org, has several resources available under the Child Protection tab, including its Policy, guidance on mandatory reporting, information about its victim assistance program, and other important resources. The website also includes a link to the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service, a third-party reporting system established by the U.S. Bishops to handle allegations involving bishops.

The Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, remains committed to all safe environment initiatives and programs. Cardinal Gregory communicated with the lay faithful several times throughout the year, including directly impacted parish communities, and His Eminence presided over a special Mass dedicated to victims, survivors, and their families for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Month in April 2024.

ADVISORY BOARD

One of the most valuable resources in the Archdiocese of Washington is its Advisory Board. The board is comprised of a majority of lay people not employed by the Archdiocese who are experts in relevant fields, including psychology, social work, counseling, law, and law enforcement. The board also includes an experienced pastor. This committed group of experts provides valuable input to the Archbishop regarding the Archdiocese's policies and safe environment practices, and the Advisory Board also provides advice to the Archbishop to assist in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults made against clergy in accordance with Canon Law, the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter)*, and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies for Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons (Essential Norms)*.

Members of the Child Protection & Safe Environment Advisory Board in 2023-2024:

- Chief J. Thomas Manger, Chair
- The Honorable Kyle Duncan
- Rev. William Gurnee
- Michael Nugent
- Deacon Joe Petrizzo, LCSW
- The Honorable Karla Smith
- Jessie Tappel, LPC, LCPC, ACS
- Josue Zelaya