

Communicating the Policy of the Diocese of Helena

pertaining to Article 7
of the USCCB *Charter for the Protection
of Children and Young People*

March 2007



The below listed numbers are private and can be used with the understanding of strictest confidentiality at any hour.

Please make certain you leave your name and call back number with your message.

Sister Rita McGinnis, Chancery Services Director/Diocesan Contact Person

Phone with Voice Mail Options: 406-442-5820, Ext. 23

800-584-8914, Ext. 23

Communicating the Policy

The Diocese of Helena is committed to the mandates, norms and intent of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. In 1993 Bishop Elden F. Curtiss promulgated the diocesan policy regarding *Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment*. In 2003 Bishop Robert C. Morlino approved and promulgated a diocesan revised policy that incorporated the changes mandated by the USCCB's *Charter and Essential Norms*. In 2007 Bishop George Leo Thomas re-issued the Policy with adaptations resulting from the 2005 revision of the *Charter and Norms*. The revised policy is available on the diocesan website: www.diocesehelena.org. The Diocese wishes to respect the privacy and the reputation of all who might be involved in these sad situations; at the same time, we wish to be as open and transparent as possible, especially to assist those directly affected by ministerial misconduct {*Charter, 7*}.

Concern for Victims

Pastoral outreach to the victims and those affected in the faith communities is critical. Pastoral concern for the reputation of the good name of priests and laity is also critical. Reaching out to the victims is crucial in all that is done.

A complaint form for allegations is available to parishes, missions, volunteers, staff members, parishioners and all others who need it. It is available on the diocesan website www.diocesehelena.org and at the diocesan Chancery, as well as in parishes. It is published in *The Montana Catholic* (a copy of the document concludes this appendix).

The Safe Environment Program called for by the Charter (Article 12) is established throughout the Diocese by means of the VIRTUS® Program. Training sessions and information about the program will be available online. Awareness of the program is published through *The Montana Catholic*, General Mailings, the Diocesan website, and special mailings. Awareness of services provided to victims is available from the Director of Chancery Services or Victim's Assistance Coordinator. These services are provided on a case-by-case basis. For more information please contact our Director of Chancery Services at 1-800-584-8914, Ext. 77, or by mail at P.O. Box 1729, Helena, MT 59624.

When appropriate, the Director of Chancery Services (or a delegate), with approval of the Bishop and in collaboration with the Victim's Assistance Coordinator, prepares a statement for presentation to the affected parish community expressing support for the victims and those in need of healing. The Director of Chancery Services presents the statement at a designated gathering. The statement addresses the services of healing and reconciliation that will be made available, as well as other supportive services that can assist the community's needs. These services might be healing and prayer experiences, liturgies, and awareness of counseling and other support services.

Communication

The Diocese strongly encourages people to report allegations of sexual abuse and/or harassment to the Director of Chancery Services at 1-800-584-8914, Ext.77 or by mail at P.O. Box 1729, Helena, MT 59624 or e-mail victimassistance@diocesehelena.org. The allegations will be conveyed promptly to the Bishop and the Victim's Assistance Coordinator and will be promptly investigated. Confidentiality and concern for the well-being of all parties involved will be honored.

Ordinarily the Communications Services Director serves as the official spokesperson for the Diocese. S/he along with the Director of Chancery Services initiates any secular press releases. The Bishop may delegate this role if extraordinary circumstances arise. The Communications Services Director, with approval of the Bishop, oversees the following publications: The Montana Catholic, General Mailing, and the diocesan website.

The Bishop reserves the right to agree to interviews and serve as spokesperson in situations requiring his presence. The Bishop grants radio, television and press interviews when appropriate.

Pastoral Care

In all areas of communication, concern for the victims, healing for those affected and the well-being and reputation of all involved is conducted with Christian pastoral sensitivity and care. Our Communications efforts adhere to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Essential Norms, the diocesan Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment, and other relevant programs, services, and documents.

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with the understanding of strictest confidentiality at any hour.
Please make certain you leave your name
and call back number with your message.

Director of Chancery Services
P O Box 1729
Helena MT 59624-1729
Fax: 406-442-1085
Phone with Voice Mail Options:
406-442-5820, Ext. 23
800-584-8914, Ext. 23
E-Mail: victimassistant@diocesehelena.org

Diocesan Website
www.diocesehelena.org

Complaint Form: Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct
by Clergy, Church Ministers or Volunteers
Diocese of Helena

Information about Complainant:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

E-mail: _____

Information about the Sexual Abuse or Misconduct:

Date of abuse/misconduct: _____

Name of victim: _____

Age of victim at time of abuse (only for sexual abuse claim): _____

Name of abuser/one accused of misconduct: _____

Description of abuse/misconduct (continue on separate sheet, as necessary):

Signature of Complainant

Date

Upon completion, this form should be sent to:
Sister Rita McGinnis, Diocesan Contact Person
Diocese of Helena

PO Box 1729; Helena, MT 59624-1729

If you have any questions or concerns about how to complete this form to present an allegation,
please contact Sister Rita McGinnis in writing at the above address, or at:

E-mail: rmcginnis@diocesehelena.org

800-584-8914, ext. 23 or 406-442-5820, ext. 23

Fax 406-442-1085

(all above numbers are private and confidential)

Go to the diocesan website at www.diocesehelena.org for policies.

Pursuant to policy, all complaints of sexual abuse involving priests, religious, employees and volunteers
serving the Diocese of Helena will be investigated by the diocesan Response Team.

For exact process, please refer to the back of this form

All information received will be treated with confidentiality.

All alleged victims are advised of their right to report the alleged abuse to public authorities.

Diocese of Helena

Procedures for Action with Regard to an Allegation of Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct

The Five Step Process

- 1. The Diocesan Contact Person receives in writing an allegation of sexual abuse or misconduct involving a priest, deacon, religious order priest, religious brother or sister, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Helena. The Diocesan Contact Person will immediately inform the Bishop that an allegation has been received.**
- 2. The Bishop or his designee then:**
 - a. Offers to meet personally with the alleged victim;**
 - b. Assigns in writing the Victim's Assistance Advocate to provide immediate care and support for the alleged victim.**
 - c. Assigns in writing the Diocesan Response Team, lead by the Diocesan Contact Person, to conduct a preliminary investigation of the allegation. *(This process is further defined in the Diocese of Helena Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment pgs. 11-12 and 18-19)***
- 3. The Response Team reports in writing to the Bishop the results of the preliminary investigation.**
 - a. If there is no evidence of wrong doing the investigation is closed. The alleged victim is notified and reminded of his/her rights to pursue legal or civil remedy. The Bishop and the Victims Assistance Advocate may continue to provide the alleged victim with care and support including psychological counseling, spiritual direction or other such support as may be deemed beneficial to the alleged victim.**
 - b. If there is evidence of wrongdoing...**
 - i. The Bishop will revoke the faculties of the alleged priest or deacon abuser, if the allegation is made against a lay employee or volunteer they will be placed on administrative leave. For religious order priests or religious brothers or sisters ministering in the diocese, the Bishop will inform the Superior of their community and suspend his permission to minister in the diocese. *(This process is further defined in the Diocese of Helena Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment pgs. 12-14 and 19-20)***
 - ii. The Bishop works with the Victims Assistance Advocate to provide for the care and support of the alleged victim. This care could encompass both pastoral and psychological dimensions but is open to the needs of the alleged victim and will involve his/her input.**
 - iii. The Bishop reviews the allegation and the results of the investigation with the Diocesan Review Board and seeks their advice on how to proceed.**
 - c. If the preliminary investigation finds the allegation "credible" the Bishop convenes a formal investigation to determine the truth of the allegation. If appropriate the Bishop will notify civil authorities.**
 - d. Should the person against whom an allegation is made admit the truth of the allegation, the Bishop will consult with the Review Board and determine appropriate sanctions.**
- 4. The Review Board will deliberate the results of all relevant investigations. They will advise the Bishop on how to proceed with regard to legal, civil and pastoral actions to be taken;**
 - a. The appropriate actions to take in dealing with the alleged perpetrator.**
 - b. The appropriate actions to take in providing care for the victim of abuse.**
- 5. The Bishop will respond in writing to the Chairperson of the Review Board that he has received their recommendations and outline what specific steps he is prepared to take.**

Note: This Five Step Process and the Diocesan Policy conform to the *Essential Norms* and the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.