ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

The Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY)

Archdiocese of Chicago's Response to Sexual Abuse of Minors

Early and Decisive

1991
Cardinal Joseph Bernardin convened lay commission to review the Archdiocese of Chicago's procedures for handling accusations of sexual abuse.

1992
The Archdiocese of Chicago put in place policies and procedures to address allegations and issues related to sexual abuse of minors.

The Archdiocese of Chicago created the first Office of Victim Assistance Ministry to provide direct outreach and support to victims-survivors and their families.

The Archdiocese of Chicago created an independent office (now known as the Office of Child Abuse Investigations and Review) to receive allegations of abuse of minors by clergy.

1993
The Archdiocese of Chicago's Independent Review Board convened to review allegations of abuse and to make direct recommendations of the accused clergy's fitness for ministry to Cardinal.

Comprehensive and Sustained

The Archdiocese of Chicago created the **Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY)** in 2003 to bring together the various ministries within the archdiocese that had been operating to ensure the archdiocese is a safe place for children. The following offices work together to stay current on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse:

Office for Assistance Ministry (OAM) personnel reach out and extend supportive services to victims-survivors from the moment they come forward with an allegation of clergy sexual abuse. This includes traveling throughout the country

Healing Garden at Holy Family Church in Chicago.

with personnel from the Office of Child Abuse Investigation and Review (CAIR) to meet with and listen to victims-survivors. OAM personnel also provide the opportunity for victims-survivors to get independent professional counseling from fully accredited therapists. Additionally, OAM personnel have worked in collaboration with victims-survivors to respond to their need for healing. This has led to the development of the Healing Garden, annual Mass for Hope and Healing and Pinwheel Service for Child Abuse Prevention, victim-survivor led peace circles, and the Healing Voices magazine. To date over 400 victims-survivors and family members have been served by OAM personnel.

Office of Child Abuse Investigation and Review (CAIR) is headed by a lay professional who provides a compassionate and thorough process for receiving and investigating reports of child abuse against archdiocesan personnel. Archdiocese personnel notify public authorities of all reports of possible abuse of any kind and from any date, regardless of legal requirements.

- The Director of CAIR serves as staff for the Independent Review Board, which is an advisory board for the Cardinal. The Board's main charges are ensuring the safety of children and determining a cleric's fitness for ministry. Over 230 recorded Board meetings have been held. The Board has determined 296 allegations of abuse to be substantiated and determined 75 allegations of abuse to not be substantiated.

Safe Environment Office personnel provide resources to educate archdiocesan clergy, employees and volunteers on how to prevent child sexual abuse, how to recognize sex offender behavior and how to create safe environments for children and youth.

Since 2003 more than 3,700 training sessions in the archdiocese have been held training more than 263,000 adults.

- Archdiocesan parishes and schools are required to provide valuable training to children and youth on how to recognize, respond and report grooming or abuse.
- Safe Environment Office personnel also screen, through name-based background checks, all clergy, employees and volunteers. Office personnel also receive and review fingerprint results for school personnel.
- All employees and volunteers who work with children and youth in the archdiocese must submit a CANTS (Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking Systems) Form.
- All employees and volunteers in the archdiocese must abide by the archdiocese's Standards of Behavior.
- The archdiocese requires Mandated Reporter Training for all clergy, school personnel, religious education personnel, youth ministers and coaches as part of the archdiocese's Safe Environment Compliance.

Priest Monitoring Program is the Archdiocese of Chicago's stringent monitoring program of clergy with substantiated cases of sexual abuse against them. These men have been withdrawn from ministry and are prohibited from presenting themselves as a priest. They are required to comply with numerous restrictions to provide safety for the community, the program participants, and the Church.

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was approved in 2002 by the bishops of the United States Catholic Conference.

The latest revision was approved June 2018.

The *Charter* reinforced what the Archdiocese of Chicago was doing by requiring all dioceses to:

- Heal and promote reconciliation of victims-survivors and their families;
- Make prompt and effective response to abuse allegations;
- Cooperate with civil authorities;
- Discipline offenders;
- Create a safe environment for children and young people through training and screening;
- Provide means of accountability for the future and to ensure the problem continues to be effectively dealt with through the **Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection** and the **National Review Board**.

Every year the Archdiocese of Chicago participates in an audit of the implementation of the *Charter's* requirements. Every year the archdiocese passes the audit.

To report an allegation of abuse and/or neglect of minors, contact the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Hotline at 800.25.ABUSE and/or contact your local police department. You can also contact the Office of the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY) at 312.534.5254.