



FACT SHEET

Commitment to Keeping Children and Vulnerable Adults Safe

November 2008

1. The Bishops of the Green Bay Diocese have and will continue to extend invitations to meet with victims/survivors and their families because being heard is a critical part of the healing process.
2. No one with a credible allegation of abuse against them is allowed to serve in public ministry.
3. We have been asked to release the names of alleged offenders. We do so through our mandatory reporting of all credible allegations of abuse to local civil authorities – no exceptions. This requirement respects people’s civil rights and it allows civil authorities to do what they do best – investigate and prosecute.
4. We require all employees at our parishes, schools, diocesan facilities and offices and all adult volunteers who have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults to sign our code of conduct, undergo a background check, and participate in VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children for Adults training. In the last five years, we’ve conducted background checks on approximately 18,000 employees and volunteers. Each person undergoes a new background check every four years. Also, nearly 20,000 people have participated in VIRTUS. Priests, deacons, administrators and employees who work closely with children receive ongoing education through monthly VIRTUS training bulletins.
5. In July 2003, this Diocese appointed its first victim assistance coordinator and a year later established the Safe Environment Office. The staff is responsible for reaching out to victims/survivors and their families, working with local authorities, coordinating VIRTUS training, maintaining relevant records, and preparing for our annual audit which measures our compliance with national standards.
6. In September 2003, all of the Bishops of Wisconsin supported two proposed changes to our state laws. First, all clergy (priests as well as rabbis, ministers, deacons and imams) are included in the list of “mandated reporters,” meaning they along with teachers, therapists, physicians, law officers and many other professionals are legally obligated to report child sexual abuse to local authorities. Second, abuse victims have more years in which to pursue a civil lawsuit or criminal prosecution. The statute of limitations under civil law was extended an additional 15 years – to age 35 – while the statute of limitations under criminal law was extended another 19 years – to age 45. These changes became law on April 20, 2004.
7. In 2004, we participated in a national study which required us to review all clergy files from 1950 to 2002 for any allegations of abuse. Every claim we found was turned over to local authorities, even if the allegation had been reported previously.
8. With guidance from the Independent Review Board, we continually update our policies regarding appropriate behavior. The policies, which were originally introduced in our schools in 1973 and have been expanded to include our parishes and all diocesan facilities, have been reviewed and strengthened in the 1980s, 1990s, and in this decade as well.
9. We have participated in and passed all six national audits. The audits, which are conducted by former FBI agents employed by an independent auditing firm, measure our compliance with national standards such as communicating with victims/survivors; processing allegations; conducting background checks; and educating adults and children about how to prevent abuse.
10. Through our diocesan web site, diocesan newspaper and parish bulletins, we regularly provide information on how to report abuse.

To read the full summary of our work dating back to 1973, see “Summary of Work to End Sexual Abuse” at www.gbdioc.org/pg/dioceseProtectingOurChildren.tpl.