

**ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY FOR ALLEGED CASES  
OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND CHILD ABUSE**

The policy of the Diocese of Spokane in alleged cases of Sexual Abuse or Child Abuse by church employees, including priests and deacons, includes the pastoral care of the victim and his/her family, the immediate evaluation and just treatment for the alleged offender, and the reconciliation of all involved, as part of the ministry of the Church. When an allegation is brought to the attention of the Diocese, without an assumption of guilt, we will take the following steps:

1. Allegations of Sexual Abuse or Child Abuse must be reported to the Office of the Bishop by those who know or have reasonable cause to believe that abuse has taken place. The Diocese will respond promptly to the pastoral needs of the victim, the family, and the accused. The Moderator of the Curia will be the lead agent in this response.
2. The Diocese will verify notification of the appropriate governmental agency. The legally mandated "reporting channel" for abuse of children is the Child Protective Services of the Department of Social and Health Services. The Diocese will further direct all church employees, lay and clergy, to cooperate in the investigation. If the accused is an employee of the Diocese and he/she fails to cooperate, he/she will be suspended from duties without pay. A priest or deacon is liable to the canonical penalty of suspension for failure to cooperate with the investigation.
3. The Diocese will inform the accused individual that an allegation has been made, that an investigation and evaluation by proper authorities will begin immediately. In cases of alleged sexual abuse, without assumption of guilt the accused individual will be relieved of his/her duties without pay during the investigation. A priest or deacon will be removed from sacred ministry during the course of the investigation in accord with c. 1722.

**REGARDING CASES OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

4. In all cases of confirmed sexual abuse, the Diocese will terminate the employment of the individual. A priest or deacon will be subject to canonical penalties or other prohibitions to ministry.
5. Every effort will be made to see that the individual receives treatment for the disorder.
6. If an employee, priest, deacon, or seminarian whom the Diocese knows has been involved in a case of substantiated sexual abuse seeks to relocate to another diocese or place of

employment, or if the Diocese becomes aware that the person is seeking to relocate, the Ordinary or appropriate authority will be notified immediately that there are some constraining circumstances in the Diocese.

7. A committee has been established for consultation to the Diocese in cases of sexual abuse. This committee will be informed of all cases of sexual abuse. The initial committee includes the Moderator of the Curia, the Vicar for Priests, an attorney, a mental health professional, and a layperson appointed by the Bishop. This committee is advisory to the Bishop and any recommendations made to him are confidential. Implementation of any recommendations will be the decision of the Bishop.

In cases where a cleric seeks reinstatement to ministry after treatment, the Bishop will seek consultation with this committee after sharing with them the diagnosis and recommendations after treatment of the person in question. The final decision is the responsibility of the Bishop.

The committee has available as resource the proposed protocols of a number of entities. It will use these as references to guide its work and in making recommendations.

#### **IN CASES OF CHILD ABUSE**

8. In cases of the physical or emotional abuse of a minor or of an individual who is incapable of caring for his/her own best interests because of physical or emotional handicap, the diocese will react in a similar mode as in the case of sexual abuse.

#### **PROPER REPORTING OF ABUSIVE SITUATIONS**

9. When priests or deacons serving in this Diocese become aware of situations of abuse, they must determine if they have come to this awareness as pastoral ministers or institutional administrators. For cases in which the seal of confession does not apply and in which the priest or deacon is clearly responsible as a diocesan administrator, the proper reporting of the abuse to civil authorities is to take place as set forth by civil statutes (even though priests are not technically required by statute to report).
10. All other employees of the Diocese are to comply with statutory reporting requirements when they become aware of situations of abuse, which are covered by civil statute.

#### **REQUIREMENT FOR EDUCATION ON ISSUES OF ABUSE**

11. It is the policy of the Diocese to provide for education for all priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, principals, and administrators of programs regarding the issues of child and sexual abuse. All priests, deacons and laypersons who hold administrative responsibility will be required to participate in the programs which are presented.

#### **IDENTIFICATION OF BEHAVIORS WHICH ARE DEEMED INAPPROPRIATE**

12. Those who act in the name of the Church have tremendous power in the lives of the people to whom they minister. The great power differential which is present causes them to be held to a higher standard of behavior. In such relationships, the reality is that the inappropriateness of behavior is judged not by the intent of the person, but its impact upon the recipient.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Spokane to expect from all clergy, employees, and volunteers behaviors that are faithful to Catholic moral standards in their relationships with parishioners and recipients of service. Not only must the actual behavior meet appropriate standards, but all clergy, employees and volunteers are expected to act in a way, which does not give the appearance of being inappropriate.

To make this policy more specific the following behaviors are deemed inappropriate:

Sexual relationships with parishioners, counselees, students, or collaborators in ministry.

Touches and embraces that are not acceptable or are uncomfortable to the individual as appropriate to sex and age.

Language and non-verbal communication which is suggestive, demeaning or controlling of another person.

The singling out of persons, especially children, for special personal attention or personal gifts.

The taking of young people on personal trips or vacations without other adults or appropriate chaperons.

The development of relationships with parishioners or clients which mix and intertwine professional responsibilities with "peer" group behaviors in an inappropriate way.

The appearance or the reality of concealing or asking individuals to conceal the fact and nature of an interpersonal relationship.

The suggestion that the relationship between care givers and those who seek their help is a "two-way" relationship in which the care giver also receives help from the interaction.

Approval by Bishop Skylstad 10/11/89  
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