

HELP FOR VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

Reporting Sexual Abuse of a Minor by a Priest, Deacon, Employee or Volunteer of the Diocese of Springfield

If you have been the victim of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, or individual representing the Catholic Church in a diocese or eparchy in the United States, there are several things you can do.

- You may contact the appropriate law enforcement agency to determine if the incident falls within the statute of limitations in the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred.
- You may contact local child protection agencies or a private attorney.
- It is particularly important, for help, healing, and response from the Diocese, that you contact the Victim Services Coordinator, who is available to assist you in making a formal complaint of abuse to the Diocese, in arranging a personal meeting with the Bishop or his representative, and for obtaining support for your specific needs.

Contact:

Patricia Finn McManamy, LICSW
Office of Child and Youth Protection
(413) 452-0624 (confidential line)
1-800 842-9055 (toll-free confidential line)
p.mcmanamy@diospringfield.org

To report suspected child abuse to the MA Dept. of Children and Families (DCF), formerly known as the Dept. of Social Services (DSS):

Springfield, 413-452-3200
Holyoke, 413-493-2600 (or 1-800-698-3935)
Northampton, 413-584-1698 (or 1-800-841-2692)
Greenfield, 413-775-5000 (or 1-800-842-5905)
Pittsfield, 413-236-1800 (or 1-800-292-5022)

After hours, call 1-800-792-5200.

Process for Making a Formal Report of Sexual Abuse of a Minor by a Priest, Deacon, Employee or Volunteer of the Diocese of Springfield

Massachusetts State Law defines a minor as someone under the age of 18 years. If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual abuse, assault, molestation or exploitation as a minor by a person working for the Roman Catholic Church within the Diocese of Springfield (such as a priest, deacon, sister, brother, employee, volunteer, etc.), whether the abuse took place recently or in the past, we ask that you report the incident in the following manner:

Call the Victim Services Coordinator at the Office of Child and Youth Protection at (413) 452-0624 or the toll-free hotline at (800) 842-9055. You may also send your report by mail to the Office of Child and Youth Protection at 65 Elliot St., P.O. Box 1730, Springfield, MA 01102-1730. You may schedule a meeting with the Victim Assistance Coordinator.

To the extent such information is available, you will be asked to provide the following:

- Your name and contact information and;
- If known, the name, address and telephone number of the minor victim and his/her parents or other person responsible for the minor's care;
- The gender, age (date of birth), of the victim and his/her age at the time of abuse;
- The name of the person who committed the abuse;
- The dates(s) when the abuse took place;
- The location(s) where the abuse took place;
- The circumstances and nature of the abuse;
- The frequency and duration of the abuse;
- Names of any witnesses or individuals who were present at the time of the abuse;
- Names of any individuals that the incident was reported to; and
- Any other information you believe is necessary.

You will be encouraged to put your statement in writing. The Victim Services Coordinator will assist with this process if needed.

If the victim is a minor at the time of your report, the Victim Services Coordinator will file a report with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

If you are a mandated reporter, you must file a report directly with the Department of Children and Families and/or the appropriate law enforcement agencies as required by law.

If you are a non-mandated reporter under Massachusetts law, you should also be aware of your right to make a report to the appropriate authorities concerning

this matter. We encourage you to report all alleged or suspected abuse of minors to the MA Department of Children and Families and/or appropriate law enforcement agencies.

TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE:

During business hours, call the appropriate office:
Springfield, 413-452-3200
Holyoke, 413-493-2600 (or 1-800-698-3935)
Northampton, 413-584-1698 (or 1-800-841-2692)
Greenfield, 413-775-5000 (or 1-800-842-5905)
Pittsfield, 413-236-1800 (or 1-800-292-5022)

After hours, call 1-800-792-5200.

**After a Report of Sexual Abuse Is Received by the
Office of Child and Youth Protection**

When your report is received, the Victim Services Coordinator will communicate the information to the appropriate child protection and law enforcement agencies, as required by law, and to the designated Diocesan officials for a thorough investigation. This information will be presented to the Diocesan Review Board.

If a person making a report does not give his/her name and contact information, the Diocese will retain on file any information that is provided for reference in possible related allegations, but it is unlikely that the Diocese will be able to pursue an investigation in that particular case. If you are not ready to provide the necessary information, we encourage you to do so as soon as you do feel ready. The Victim Services Coordinator is available to meet or speak with you at any time.

If it is determined the allegation is not in the purview of the Review Board, it will be forwarded to the appropriate Diocesan authority.

If the Review Board determines that the allegation warrants further investigation, the Bishop is informed that an investigation will be made. The Victim Services Coordinator contacts the Diocesan Investigator.

The investigator will meet with the person who alleges abuse, at that person's convenience, and with the support of the Victim Services Coordinator if

requested. During this interview, specific questions regarding the details of the incident will be discussed. The investigator will attempt to identify and contact any other persons who may have relevant knowledge about the allegation.

The Diocese has pledged to respond to all allegations of child sexual abuse swiftly, decisively, fairly and openly. The information that individuals bring to our attention is used not only for a current investigation, but can be considered in the event an additional allegation is made against the same individual. While we understand the reluctance of some reporters to reveal their identity or contact information, it is extremely difficult, and often impossible, to conduct an investigation without this information. We appreciate that this can be an emotionally challenging experience. Persons who would like to have additional information about the process before committing to going forward are welcome to contact the Victim Services Coordinator with their questions and concerns.

Actions of the Review Board after a Report of Sexual Abuse Is Investigated

The accused person has the right to know about an accusation of abuse and to respond to Review Board. The accused person may choose to meet with the Review Board.

Individuals reporting abuse may meet with the Review Board if they wish. They may bring a support person such as a friend, spouse, or an attorney not in litigation with Diocese regarding the allegation. Such a meeting would not occur at the same time the Review Board meets with the person who has been accused.

If the Review Board finds the victim's allegations credible, the Review Board Chair informs the Bishop of the board's findings. The board may recommend that the Diocese assist with payment for psychotherapy expenses.

If the Review Board is not able to substantiate abuse, the Chair will inform the Bishop of these findings. Support will be available from the Victim Services Coordinator if requested.

Confidentiality

The Springfield Diocese does everything within its control to maintain the confidentiality of the information it receives. **The Diocese will not publish or share with the public any identifying information of those reporting abuse.**

However, absolute confidentiality and/or anonymity cannot be guaranteed in an allegation involving child sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Springfield. The information contained in a report of abuse may be reviewed by: the Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, the Diocesan Review Board, the Chancellor, the Victim Assistance Coordinator, the Department of Children and Families (in cases involving a minor at the time of report), the District Attorney, and other individuals deemed necessary.

The Diocese of Springfield will not enter into any confidentiality agreements regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors except for grave and substantial reasons that are advanced by victim and noted in the text of the agreement.

Outreach to Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse and Their Families

Assistance with payment for outpatient therapy expenses may be provided to survivors with credible claims of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon or other church personnel of the Springfield Diocese. This is arranged through the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

To obtain further information about how to access services and what kinds of therapeutic services are covered, please contact:

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