

Independent Task Force on the Response to Sexual Abuse within the Diocese of Springfield

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Independent Task Force on the Response to Sexual Abuse within the Diocese of Springfield?

The Task Force was appointed by Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski in early 2020 to develop a strategic plan recommending initiatives and measurable objectives to improve the diocese's response to allegations of sexual abuse. The Task Force is comprised of [10 members](#) with diverse personal and professional background from across the four counties of western Massachusetts.

What is the purpose of the Task Force?

The Diocese of Springfield has acknowledged its past failure to adequately support healing for individuals who were sexually abused by clergy and other representatives of the Catholic Church. The Task Force will develop a plan with recommended initiatives and measurable objectives to improve the diocese's response in the following strategic areas:

1. Acknowledging the trauma of sexual abuse on members of the community and ensuring the allocation of resources needed to promote healing of individuals who have been sexually abused and the faith community;
2. Responding to all allegations of sexual abuse in the church community in a timely, compassionate and fair way;
3. Ensuring the diocese has a transparent system of protocols and procedures that guarantee respect and due process for all involved;
4. Ensuring that local church leadership is held responsible and accountable for failing to protect children and other vulnerable persons;
5. Holding those who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse responsible and accountable; and
6. Preventing sexual abuse of anyone in the faith communities in the future.

How is the Task Force “independent?”

While the Task Force is being supported by the staff at the OSEVA, its diverse group of professionals are following best practice strategic planning protocols to ensure that their recommendations reflect the many voices of those affected by sexual abuse both past and present. Therefore, the Task Force is building consensus on a strategic plan informed by multiple stakeholders.

How does the Task Force make decisions about what it will recommend?

The Task Force consensus building is being informed by multiple stakeholders including 500 respondents from the community at-large who participated in an online survey in October 2020; the three district attorneys of western Massachusetts; focus groups, surveys and conversations

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with survivors facilitated by Stop It Now!, an internationally recognized sexual abuse prevention organization; and input from members of the diocesan clergy. The final recommendations will reflect all of these various stakeholder inputs and many voices.

What will the Diocese of Springfield do with the strategic plan developed by the Task Force?

The Task Force will submit their strategic plan to Bishop William D. Byrne when it is complete. The plan will serve as a blueprint for the initiatives already and/or to be undertaken by the Diocese of Springfield and the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance to improve the response to allegations of sexual abuse, pastoral outreach for survivors, their families, the faith community and the families of the accused.

In the spirit of good communication, the Task Force will provide updates about significant benchmarks as they are achieved. You can contact the Task Force directly at independenttaskforce@diospringfield.org.