

Guidelines for Meeting with the Bishop

For some individuals who have filed complaints of sexual abuse by a Catholic cleric, a meeting with the Bishop can be an important step toward spiritual healing.

In keeping with Albany Diocese policy and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,"^[1] and his personal commitment to pastoral care for the well-being of all who have been affected, Bishop Edward Scharfenberger has met with many complainants and victims and has offered to meet with all who wish to speak to him personally.

This is an opportunity for you to tell Bishop Scharfenberger as much as you care to tell him about the abuse, how it has affected you and how the diocese can assist you in healing from this. To arrange for a meeting with Bishop Scharfenberger contact the Diocese's Assistance Coordinator, at (518) 453-6646. If you are represented by an attorney and wish to meet with Bishop Scharfenberger, your attorney should contact the Diocesan attorney, Michael Costello, at (518) 463-1177.

As you consider whether such a meeting would be helpful, please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- The meetings are entirely voluntary. No complainant and/or victim are required to meet with the Bishop. Bishop Scharfenberger extends the offer to meet only if a complainant/victim believes it would be helpful to his or her spiritual healing. A complainant/victim can terminate a meeting at any time.
- These are private, pastoral meetings to encourage spiritual well-being. They are not therapy sessions nor are they for the discussion of any legal or personnel matters. Indeed, no such issues will be discussed. No attorneys will be present. No representatives of the news media will be present. The meetings will not be recorded.
- A complainant/victim should feel free to invite a friend, family member, pastor/minister or therapist to support him or her emotionally during the meeting.
- The meeting will generally take place at the Diocesan Pastoral Center at 40 North Main Avenue in Albany. If you wish to meet elsewhere, please make this known to the person arranging the meeting for you and another mutually acceptable location can be arranged. Typically, depending on schedules, it can take up to 30 days to arrange a meeting once it is requested. Diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator will be present to facilitate the meeting, if they have arranged it.

Ill United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Revised Edition, 2002), Article 1 "To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors"

"... Through pastoral outreach to victims and their families, the diocesan/eparchial bishop or his representative will offer to meet with them, to listen with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns, and to share the "profound sense of solidarity and concern" expressed by our Holy Father in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers...."

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- If you are represented by an attorney, he or she will need to contact Diocesan attorney Michael Costello to schedule the meeting and will need to consent to the meeting in writing in advance. Mr. Costello can be reached at 463-1177.
 - Prior to the meeting, you may find it helpful to go over what you plan to say with a therapist or other support person. This will help ensure that you make all of the points you wish to make clearly and completely. Uncontrolled anger, while understandable, may make it difficult for your story to be heard properly and completely and may impede the progress of the meeting.
 - If you are in treatment with a psychotherapist, your therapist may find it advisable to contact the Diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, to alert them to any specific concerns of which the Bishop and the Coordinator should be aware in advance of the meeting.
 - Generally, the meetings will last about an hour. If the Diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator has been present at the meeting, they will contact you within a week of the meeting to discuss any issues that may need follow up.
 - In advance of the meeting, we will ask you to sign a copy of these guidelines.

I have read these guidelines and agree to adhere to them. I understand the nature and purpose of this meeting.

Your Name (Print)

Your Signature & Date

(Check one, please)

____My attorney (attorney name :) has provided written consent to my meeting with Bishop Scharfenberger and the Assistance Coordinator.

____I am not represented by an attorney. I understand that I am free to consult with an attorney at any time about these matters.

Diocesan Representative's Name (Print)

Diocesan Representative's Signature & Date