

#### 4) Safe Environment training for Children and Youth (Charter Article: 12)

This faith-based training helps children and young people understand their own sacredness and empowers them to participate in a safe environment for themselves and others. They will learn personal safety skills that help keep them safe from dangerous and abusive situations.

##### Topics:

**Gr K-3:** God's love and goodness surrounds us always. Respect of ourselves. Safe vs. unsafe situations. Actions to take if boundaries are crossed

**Gr 4-5:** Internet safety. Media influence

**Gr 6-8:** Healthy relationships. Respect and bullying. Moral decisions

**Gr 9-11:** Boundaries and healthy relationships. How to deal with boundary violations. Identifying an offender.

Parishes and schools will advise parents each year when training is to be presented. Parental involvement is encouraged and materials provided so parents may fulfill their role as the "primary educators". For information, call the Catholic Faith Formation Office (518) 453-6670 or Catholic School Office (518) 453-6666.

#### 5) Background Checks and Screening (Charter Article: 13)

All applicants to the priesthood and permanent diaconate are required to participate in comprehensive psychological screening and background evaluations to assess their fitness for the ministry and their fitness to work with minors.

All clergy and parish/school personnel, as well as volunteers who have regular contact with children or youth, must complete an application form, which requires references and acknowledgement of any prior conviction of a crime. They must also undergo a Social Security verification and criminal background check, which includes a check of the National Sex Offender Registry.

No one who has been convicted of sexual misconduct or found to have abused a minor may serve in the Diocese of Albany as a professional or volunteer in any capacity with children or youth.

See: [www.rcda.org](http://www.rcda.org) (click Safe Environment from the Offices drop down, click Tools and Resources)

#### 6) Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policies (Charter Article: 6)

The Albany Diocese has rigorous policies and procedures to provide a safe environment for all children and youth in our parishes and schools.

- **A Zero Tolerance Policy, which means permanent removal from ministry any clergy found to have sexually abused a minor.**
- **Guidelines for Appropriate Conduct and Professional Boundaries.**
- **Code of Conduct to be signed by all diocesan staff as well as volunteers who have regular contact with Children and Youth.**
- **Code of Conduct to be signed by all Diocesan Clergy.**
- **Code of Conduct to be signed by diocesan Youth Volunteers/ Workers.**
- **Social Media and Technology Policy that prohibits misuse of the internet.**
- **Liturgical Ministry Policy for known sex offenders**

See: [www.rcda.org](http://www.rcda.org) (click Safe Environment from the Offices drop down, click Tools and Resources)

#### 6) Reporting Child Abuse

School faculty, administrators and other staff members are designated as mandated reporters in New York State. When one of these persons receives information leading to a "reasonable suspicion" that a child is being abused or neglected, he or she must make a report to the State Central Register (Child Abuse Hotline)

**Mandated Reporters call: 1-800-635-1522**

**General Public call: 1-800-342-3720** to report suspected child abuse.

**Note:** If you are an adult who has been sexually abused as a minor by any clergy, staff or volunteer of the Albany diocese, please report the abuse to the DA's office where the abuse occurred. To report it to the diocese and obtain counseling assistance, contact:

**Assistance Coordinator at: 518-453-6646**

E-mail: [victim.assistance@rcda.org](mailto:victim.assistance@rcda.org)

# Working Together

## To Prevent Child Sexual Abuse



*Our Commitment to Protecting Minors  
and Helping Victims of Clergy Sexual  
Abuse*



*Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany  
40 North Main Avenue  
Albany, NY 12203*

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

St. Paul tells us that when one member of the Body suffers, all suffer. I have witnessed firsthand the hurt, pain and long-term trauma that sexual abuse can cause, which is exacerbated when perpetrated by a trusted authority figure. To those who have been victimized and to their families, I extend my sincere apology. Also, I am aware of the anger, pain and loss of confidence the scandal has created in the minds and hearts of many people. For this, too, I apologize.

We have learned from the mistakes of the past and are committed to doing everything possible to make the protection of children and young people, healing for victims and their families, and the removal from ministry of any clergy or Church personnel who have abused their position of sacred trust an urgent priority for our Diocese.

This brochure is a helpful guide to the sexual abuse prevention policies, educational programs and resources that have been implemented in parishes and schools throughout the Diocese. In it, you will find information about creating safe environments, what to do and who to contact if you suspect or witness abuse or misconduct, how to obtain pastoral care for abuse victims and much more. Please read it carefully and keep it for easy reference.

Our children are our precious future. Let us all continue to work together to protect them from harm, especially that of sexual abuse.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Edward B. Scharfenberger  
Bishop of Albany

## Sexual Abuse of Minors

Children are our most precious and vulnerable resource. Tragically, child sexual abuse is a reality that has occurred in trusted institutions like the Church and schools and occurs in society at large. We as the “People of God” are called to work together to stop all forms of sexual abuse wherever they occur.

### Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

Church teaching condemns the sexual abuse of children and youth as seriously sinful. The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was adopted by the Bishops of the United States in June 2002. This important document contains the Church’s response to the problem of child sexual abuse and provides a concrete prevention plan. Key requirements of the Charter include:

#### 1) Victims’ assistance coordinators to respond to the pastoral needs of those who have been injured by abuse. (Charter Articles 1, 2, 4, 12, 16)

The Albany Diocese is concerned about the well-being of those who have suffered abuse and has a designated Assistance Coordinator to help anyone who has been sexually abused by clergy, religious or laypersons working or volunteering for the Diocese. We have learned that with assistance it is possible for individuals to heal from the effects of sexual misconduct. This is not easily accomplished and the path to healing is different for each person. We make every effort to respond fairly and compassionately to those harmed and to assist them in taking some steps towards their healing.

Call the Assistance Coordinator at (518) 453-6646 to:

- report misconduct by a priest, deacon or other person working or volunteering for the Diocese of Albany;
- access counseling assistance and tell your story in a supportive environment;

- report abuse by a member of a religious community and receive assistance connecting with the appropriate religious community;
- report abuses suffered in another diocese and receive assistance in connecting with the appropriate persons in that diocese.

All allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by diocesan clergy, staff or volunteers, where the accused is alive, are reported to the appropriate civil authorities. We encourage persons with an allegation of sexual abuse to report it directly to law enforcement authorities.

#### 2) Safe Environment Coordinator (Charter Articles 2, 12 and 13)

The Human Resources Director of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany serves as the Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC). The SEC works with parishes and schools, to maintain a safe environment for children and youth. The SEC’s responsibilities include making sure that all clergy, and staff, as well as volunteers who regularly interact with children, have been background-checked, and that these adults as well as children and youth have received safe environment training.

#### 3) Safe Environment education for Adults (Charter Article: 12)

All parish/school personnel as well as volunteers who have regular contact with children and youth are required to receive education in child sexual abuse awareness and prevention.

The educational program will focus on:

- a. Raising awareness of child sexual abuse;
- b. Identifying the signs of possible sexual abuse in children, and the warning signs of inappropriate behaviors of adults who may prey on children;
- c. Strategies for controlling access to children in our care providing proper supervision and monitoring of all programs;
- d. Encouraging responsible reporting of suspected abuse; and
- e. Providing clear guidelines for making such reports.