

Child and Vulnerable Adult Misconduct Policies and Procedures

The Diocese of Reno is committed to addressing situations of misconduct especially by clergy who are rightfully held to a high moral standard as messengers of the Gospel.

A Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People (RBPCYP) was established in 2002 to assist and advise the Bishop of Reno in the handling of child and vulnerable adult misconduct cases. Its mission is regularly updated per the Norms and now includes vulnerable adults. All regular members are persons recognized for their integrity, good judgment and full communion with the Church. The majority of regular members are lay persons not in the employ of the diocese, as per the Norm requirements. One member must have professional experience in the area of sexual abuse of minors. The board meets *at least* twice a year and will meet when called if an allegation has been made or according to need. The current review board contains representative members of following areas of professional expertise:

- Social Work
- Legal
- Human Resources
- Health Care
- Retail Merchandising
- School Administration (*Education*)

While every case is unique, the following Summary of Procedures describes the general process to be followed:

1. **Mandated Reporters:** The Nevada Revised Statute, Chapter 432B, Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect, requires any person who has reasonable cause to believe child abuse may be occurring or has occurred to make a timely report to Child Protective Services (CPS) or civil law enforcement agency.
2. **Preliminary Investigation:** When the Diocese or its agent becomes aware of a possible situation of misconduct by clergy member or religious personnel, an initial inquiry is conducted to establish the facts of the case. This initial inquiry seeks to determine if any violations of diocesan policy may have occurred. This process is initiated regardless of the CPS/law enforcement investigation. If the situation is deemed “Credible” then the process continues to its conclusion.
3. **Ascertaining the Facts:** If warranted, the Diocese will follow up with a more thorough investigation to gain a more complete understanding of the circumstances of the alleged situation. Should any illegal activity be discovered or reported during this investigation, local law enforcement will be notified *if that did not already happen at the initial inquiry*. Individuals who report harm in good faith are protected from recourse when they file a report with local Child Protective Services or local civil law enforcement.

4. **Victim Assistance and Pastoral Care:** Any persons who may have been harmed by misconduct by clergy, a religious or its agent and their families will be offered appropriate assistance to help them heal from their injury. This assistance may include counselling as approved by the Bishop or his designate.
5. **Pastoral Care for the Accused:** The clergy/religious member who is accused will also be accompanied with appropriate pastoral care.
6. **Suspension or Limitation of Ministry:** Depending upon the facts of each situation, the Bishop may suspend or limit the ministry of a clergy member pending the final outcome.
7. **Civil Proceedings:** Should there be any civil inquiry or proceedings taking place (such as an investigation by law enforcement), the Bishop may postpone any final decision pending the outcome of the civil proceedings.
8. **Recommendation of the RBPCYP:** The Bishop relies on the work of the Review Board, and its Fact-Finding Committees, while formulating his decisions about allegations. He looks to the Review Board for consultation, advice and insight in handling allegations. He can also seek the assistance of the Review Board to address all aspects of sexual abuse of minors. The Review Board meets whenever necessary to direct and monitor fact-finding and to examine and assess the facts of an allegation. When the facts have been satisfactorily established and recommendations received regarding suitability for future ministry, the RBPCYP will meet once again to review the case and make recommendations to assist the Bishop in formulating a response to an allegation. The Bishop is the final judge of credibility, substance and gravity of an allegation. The Bishop alone determines what actions are to be taken in response to allegations.
9. **Communication to the Media and the Public:** Only the Bishop or his appointed delegate is to issue statements to the media about allegation(s) of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, or about the related proceedings.
10. **Action Phase:** When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor or an individual who habitually lacks the use of reason has occurred, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (“CDF”) shall be notified. Even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor or individual who habitually lacks the use of reason by a priest or deacon shall result in permanent removal from ministry. The Bishop will inform those closest to the cleric’s official assignment of his decision, including parishioners, but not the details of the allegation.

Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken to restore the good name of the person accused.

The Diocese of Reno will respect the legitimate right to privacy and good name of all parties throughout this process while also upholding the values of transparency, accountability and responsibility to the community.

The purpose of this process is to ascertain the truth, repair any damage caused, restore the legitimate standards of justice and to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults.