

Diocese of Toledo

Questions and Answers Regarding the Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal

This document has been created to answer questions, in summary form, about how the Diocese of Toledo handles sexual abuse allegations, what we do to prevent such abuse, how we train people who have contact with youth and how we form men for priesthood.

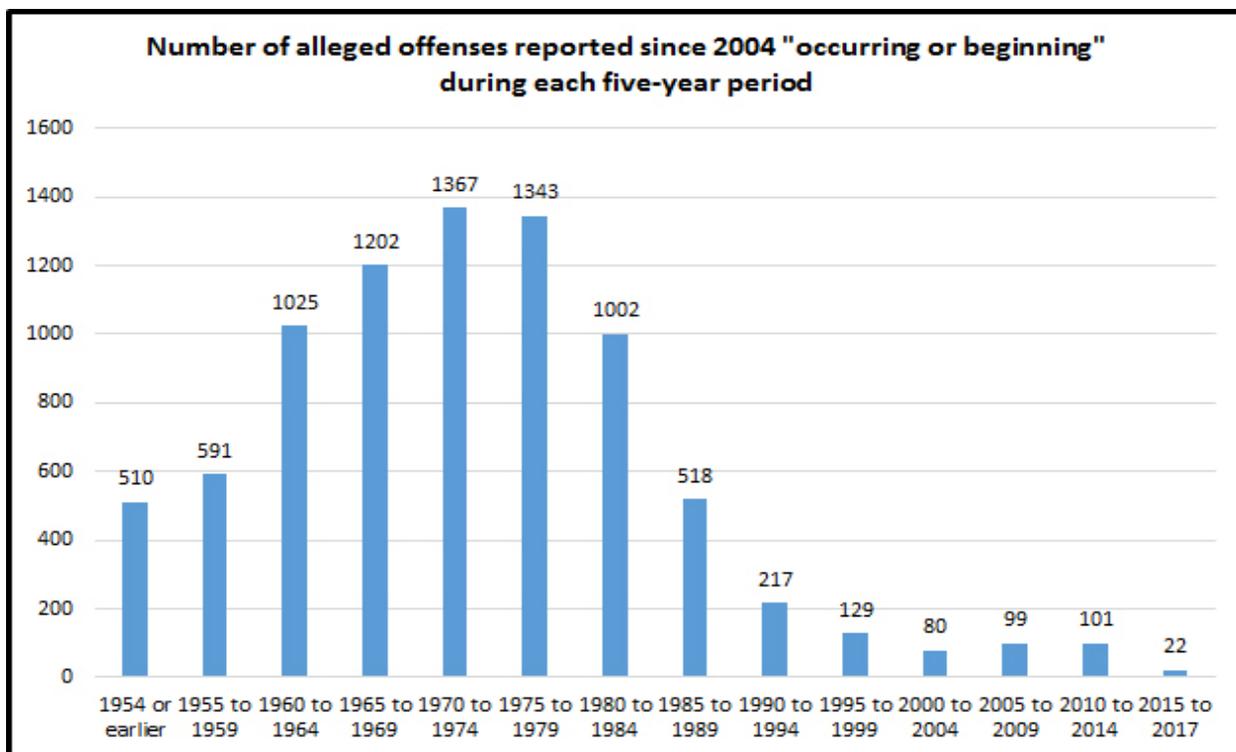
How can I report the sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric or other representatives of the Diocese of Toledo?

Any sexual abuse of a minor should first be reported to local law enforcement where the abuse is alleged to have occurred. If the abuse involves a priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer affiliated with the Diocese of Toledo, please also report it to the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at 419-214-4880.

Are there still allegations against priests?

Based on statistics and factual evidence, it is clear that the comprehensive reforms and uniform child protection procedures developed by the United States bishops in the 2002 [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#), along with much greater societal awareness and commitment to preventing child abuse, are having a significant impact and have led to drastic reductions in new allegations of abuse in the Church.

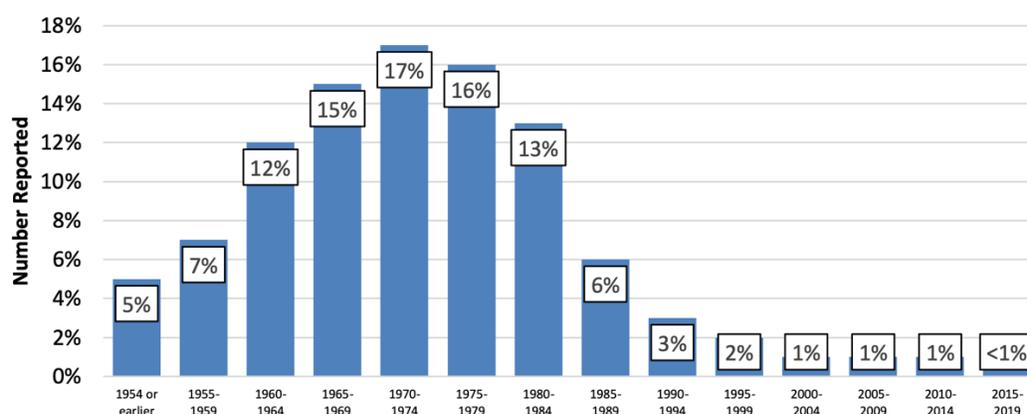
In their independent study, the [John Jay Report](#) researchers reviewed the number of allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors from 1950 to 2002, nationally. Separately, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University has collected the numbers of new [allegations](#) of sexual abuse by clergy reported from 2004 to 2017. The distribution of cases reported to CARA are nearly identical to the distribution of cases, over time, in the John Jay results. The graph below shows the results of these independent studies. Consistent with all of the data from analysis of this issue, it is clear the abuse occurred primarily in the past, from 1950-1990 and has greatly decreased since the 2002 Charter was implemented.



In 2020 the United States bishops published the [2019 Annual Report](#) on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (see below). It shows that among all new credible allegations reported by dioceses/eparchies and religious institutes to CARA from 2004-2019:

- 12 percent occurred or began in 1959 or earlier
- 27 percent occurred or began in the 1960s
- 34 percent occurred or began in the 1970s
- 19 percent occurred or began in the 1980s
- 5 percent occurred or began in the 1990s
- 2 percent occurred or began in the 2000s
- 1 percent occurred or began in the 2010s

Year Alleged Offenses Occured or Began Cumulatively for 2004-2019: Dioceses, Eparchies and Religious Institutes



What changes for the protection of children were made by the Church in 2002?

Following a 2002 revelation of widespread child sexual abuse in the Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) developed a [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) to ensure diligent measures to prevent future abuse, as well as, consistent and standard handling of abuse allegations. The Charter requires zero tolerance for all credible allegations and established policies around screening, mandatory reporting of abuse allegations to civil authorities, background checks, safe environment training, selection and training of future priests, as well as outreach to survivors of abuse.

What policies are in place in the Diocese of Toledo to protect our youth?

The Diocese has a comprehensive [Policy for the Protection of Minors and Young People](#) which includes [Accompanying Standards of Behaviors and Boundaries](#) and the [Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults](#). This policy must be followed by all bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, consecrated religious, lay people, employees, and volunteers. This policy was substantially revised and strengthened in early 2018 and took effect 1 May 2018.

What does the *Policy for the Protection of Minors and Young People* require?

The Policy lays out the required process, roles and responsibilities of individuals who work to prevent, intervene, and respond to sexual abuse. The policy addresses Diocesan Safe Environment Program, which includes specifics on the screening, formation, education, and assignment of clergy and seminarians. The Policy also provides information on the care for survivors of sexual abuse and the process by which allegations are received, investigated, and canonically processed.

What do the *Accompanying Standards of Behavior and Boundaries and Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults* require?

This section provides the required rules of behavior and boundaries for all interaction with children and young people, as well as those who may be considered “vulnerable adults.” These standards apply to all church personnel and volunteers, emphasizing that the utmost care must be taken when providing ministry and service. These Standards and Guidelines apply to all interactions, whether the individuals involved are physically present or contacted through the use of technology.

Does the Diocese’s policy require reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and cooperation with law enforcement?

When the Diocese of Toledo receives an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, the first action taken is to ensure that a report is made to the appropriate local law enforcement or civil authority. Even if a person is not designated as a Mandatory Reporter by Ohio Law, they are expected to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or suspected abuse of children, elders, or at-risk individuals no matter where the incident took place. It remains the sole discretion of law enforcement or civil officials to investigate the allegation. Even if civil law enforcement chooses not to investigate or pursue the allegation, the Diocese of Toledo engages an independent and experienced investigator who carries out an investigation of the allegation.

How does the Diocese investigate a sexual abuse claim?

After an allegation has been received by or forwarded to the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, and determined at least to have been possible, the accused is immediately placed on administrative leave by the diocesan bishop. The Diocese of Toledo cooperates fully with any civil investigation and awaits its conclusion before undertaking its own internal investigation. All facts and testimony from the internal investigation are submitted to the Diocesan Review Board, a group of 7-12 professionals specializing in areas that can include forensic psychology, psychiatry, sexual abuse victim counseling, civil and canon law, as well as civil officials involved in child abuse prevention, physicians, and a victim of sexual abuse. This group, comprised principally of lay people, functions as an independent, confidential consultative body to the bishop in assessing an allegation of sexual abuse. After their examination of all the facts and reports, the Review Board provides a written recommendation to the diocesan bishop. The bishop then makes a determination, based on canon law, the facts, evidence and the reasoned opinions and recommendations of the Review Board as to whether the allegation meets the canonical definition of “semblance of truth” (more commonly referred to as ‘more likely than not’.) If the allegation meets this standard, the matter is forwarded to the Vatican (Holy See) for a final decision. The Holy See judges such cases and determines the accused’s suitability for ministry.

How are Church Personnel trained to prevent sexual abuse?

All priests, deacons, seminarians, consecrated religious, lay people, employees and volunteers who have contact with minors are required to complete FBI and BCI background checks and the Safe Environment

training program. This program teaches how to identify signs of misconduct and best practices for making churches, schools and communities safer. Further, the Standards and Guidelines instruct that those who serve in the name of the church, even if they are not designated as a Mandatory Reporter by Ohio Law, are expected to report incidents of abuse, neglect or suspected abuse of children, elders, or at-risk individuals. Clergy and individuals who work with youth in the Church are surrounded each day by people who have completed the Safe Environment training program and who have agreed to follow the mandatory Standards and Guidelines. Annually, approximately 5,500 individuals in the Diocese of Toledo receive Safe Environment training. Such individuals are expected to help set the standard of behavior and report any problem behavior.

Is there outside verification of the Diocese of Toledo's compliance with these prevention practices?

The Diocese participates in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) annual audit on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The audit, conducted by an independent firm, reviews prevention and reports training of both children and adults, as well as background checks for those whose service brings them into contact with children. The auditors research the programs used, the frequency of required training/background checks and the means of data collection. Information is given on posting of procedures and the screening for seminarians and candidates for the permanent diaconate. This audit is completed on an annual basis. In addition, an "on-site" audit is conducted every 3 years, accompanied by in-person interviews of all diocesan personnel involved with child and youth protection and victim assistance. The latest audit conducted in 2020 found the Diocese of Toledo to be in compliance. The Diocese has passed the audit every cycle, with no problems or issues of non-compliance identified by the outside auditors. The next review is scheduled for 2021.

What is being done to ensure healthy and well-formed future priests?

The application process for entering seminary is multi-layered and follows very stringent standards. The candidates first enter a discernment process with the Director of Diocesan Priestly Vocations through discernment retreats and conversations. These conversations and interactions help the director evaluate each individual on a personal and informal level. Eventually, the director conducts a formal, pre-application interview with the candidate to discuss all areas pertaining to ministerial lifestyle including: prayer life, sexuality, physical health, emotional health, academic background, family-of-origin experiences, financial history and employment history. Once an individual begins to understand and demonstrate evidence of a call to the priesthood and once the director has reached a similar conclusion that God might be calling the man to discern more seriously a call to ministry, then the director may give permission for the individual to begin the formal application process.

What does the formal application process for seminary and permanent diaconate formation require?

For seminarians: Candidates who apply for affiliation as seminarians with the Diocese of Toledo are required to complete several different rigorous screenings conducted by various professionals. All

applicants undergo a battery of psychological tests with a licensed psychologist who prepares a comprehensive report of clinical scores, professional assessment and recommendations for each candidate. This evaluation addresses an applicant's emotional health, maturity level, family background, psycho-sexual health and ability to maintain appropriate boundaries. All applicants undergo a thorough evaluation by medical professionals and several medical screenings. Additionally, each applicant is scrutinized through several background checks including state and federal criminal background checks, personal credit checks and motor vehicle reports. Biographical information on candidates is also collected, along with academic records. Evaluations are requested from several references, including priests, laity, co-workers and teachers. After a thorough review of these components, the Diocesan Admissions Formation Board, composed of clergy, consecrated religious and lay faithful, conducts an interview with the candidate. After the interview and discussion, the Board makes a recommendation to the bishop about the suitability of the candidate for seminary studies. The Director of Diocesan Priestly Vocations personally presents to and discusses with the diocesan bishop the entire profile packet of the candidate, along with the recommendations of the Admissions Board. After thorough consideration and reflection on the materials presented, the bishop then meets personally with the Director of Diocesan Priestly Vocations again to share his decision to either accept or reject the candidate's application.

For candidates for the Permanent Diaconate: Candidates applying for the Deacon Candidate Formation Program of the Diocese of Toledo are required to undergo a battery of psychological tests with a licensed psychologist who prepares a comprehensive interpretation of clinical scores, professional assessment and recommendations for each applying candidate. This evaluation addresses an applicant's emotional health, family background, psycho-sexual health and ability to maintain boundaries. Moreover, the psychological assessment is reviewed, along with other pertinent information, i.e. state and federal criminal background checks, credit check, motor vehicle report, academic transcripts, biographical background, letter of recommendation from priests, deacons, laity, co-workers and teachers. After review of these integral components, the diocesan Deacon Candidate Admissions Board, composed of clergy, consecrated religious and lay faithful, submits a recommendation to the bishop who reviews the entire profile packet with the Vicar for Clergy. As with seminarian candidates, the diocesan bishop reflects on the materials and recommendations given and makes a decision to either accept or reject the candidate's application.

What is involved in Seminary Formation?

Seminary formation is a rigorous process that takes seven to nine years to complete. This is a full-time commitment on the part of the candidate to prepare for ministry in the Church. Seminarians take part in a multifaceted training program that is based around four "pillars" of formation: human formation; spiritual formation; pastoral formation; and intellectual formation. These pillars are used to evaluate the candidates' fitness for ministry as they move through the formation program. Any candidate who does not meet the thresholds of expected competency in any of these areas is dismissed from the formation program and not ordained for ministry.

Seminarians are regularly evaluated by a team of experts at the seminary, including clergy, religious sisters, lay women and men, psychological professionals, and professors. Through ministry immersion experiences and parish internship experiences, seminarians are evaluated by both clergy, as well as lay

men and women of the parish. Further, the Diocesan Admissions/Formation Board assists the Director of the Office for Diocesan Priestly Vocations in supervising the formation of each candidate, providing feedback on formation reports and assessing the aptitude of a candidate for priestly ministry.

The human pillar of formation focuses on the overall physical, mental and psycho-sexual health of the individual. In particular, the seminarian is taught how to live a healthy lifestyle with a focus on being able to form healthy relationships with others, while also maintaining proper professional boundaries. The spiritual pillar of formation emphasizes the forming of a seminarian to be a man of prayer who is able to lead others deeper in their own relationship with God. The academic pillar of formation provides the man with a thorough understanding of philosophy and theology. Most seminarians complete one or more graduate degrees during their seminary studies. Finally, the pastoral pillar of formation provides seminarians opportunities to learn how effectively to minister to people in various settings, while also providing formators opportunities to evaluate a seminarian's competency and effectiveness in ministering to others.

During seminarian formation each seminarian's progress in achieving thresholds of competency in each of the pillars of formation is closely monitored by a formation advisor. Additionally, each seminarian is mentored by a spiritual director who meets regularly with the candidate to help him discern whether or not he is truly being called by God to serve the Church as a priest. Considering the painful scandals caused by clergy sexual abuse in the Church, seminary formation is especially focused on identifying abnormal sexual behavior or predilection by priestly candidates in order to prevent them from entering into ministry. Further, seminary formation provides many forums for seminarians to gain a mature understanding of their sexuality and to learn how to live a commitment to celibacy in the context of healthy, meaningful relationships with other people.

How does the Diocese ensure that clergy from another diocese or religious order are screened for service in the Diocese of Toledo?

In order for a priest or deacon from outside the Diocese of Toledo to function in a ministerial capacity within our diocese, a letter of good standing (referred to as a "Letter of Suitability") must be received by the Vicar for Clergy office from the priest or deacon's home diocese or religious congregation. This letter verifies that the priest or deacon has never been accused of misconduct with a minor, that his background check is clear, and that he has completed a Safe Environment training program.

After the initial training and screenings of priests and deacons, how often are prevention methods updated?

Background screening is mandatory for all priests and deacons every five years, and background checks are made in quarterly updates each year. Through the use of new technology, the Diocese of Toledo utilizes a service that provides quarterly updates on clergy, seminarians, employees, and volunteers that would identify if a person may have been accused of crimes. This serves to inform the diocese in a timely fashion of any concerns which it otherwise would not be aware of regarding a crime committed outside of the individual's service to the Church.

What measures are in place for overseeing bishops and cardinals?

On May 7, 2019, Pope Francis published his Apostolic Letter [*Vos estis lux mundi*](#) (“You are the light of the world”) to address the issue of sexual abuse by and the accountability of bishops in the global Catholic Church. This new universal law established a solid reporting system which institutes a metropolitan model to investigate bishops and the requirement that each diocese (and eparchy) establish a system to report abuse and/or cover up of abuse by any bishop.

In June 2019, one month after Pope Francis issued his order, the bishops of the United States convened for their general assembly in Baltimore and [authorized the design of a third-party system to receive reports](#) in accord with the norms set forth in *Vos estis lux mundi*. As part of an ongoing commitment to carrying out *Vos estis lux mundi*, the “Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service” (CBAR) was established. The service is operated by Convercent, Inc. an independent, third-party entity that provides intake services to private institutions for reports of sensitive topics such as sexual abuse, harassment, or cover up of such conduct through a secure, confidential, and professional platform. [Any person can submit a confidential report regarding a bishop.](#)

When a report is received, the report or allegation is transmitted both to the Holy See and to the local metropolitan archbishop who undertakes the responsibility of initially assessing the report. Archbishop Dennis Schnurr of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati is the Metropolitan who presides over the Ohio province which includes the Diocese of Toledo.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting (CBAR) service allows for any person to file a report concerning a U.S. Catholic bishop who has:

- forced someone to perform or to submit to sexual acts through violence, threat, or abuse of authority;
- performed sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person;
- produced, exhibited, possessed, or distributed child pornography, or recruited or induced a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions;
- or, intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation or has failed to report allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious. (Note, this might include not only a bishop but also an eparchial bishop, or a cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a diocesan or eparchial bishop.)

For more information on The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting (CBAR) service and how it works, please visit: ReportBishopAbuse.org.

How does the Diocese of Toledo help survivors of abuse?

Anyone who has made a substantiated allegation of abuse against a cleric or other representative of the Church is offered the compassionate care of the Victim Assistance Coordinator, the pastoral and spiritual support of the Church and counseling assistance with a counselor of their choosing, for as long as it is helpful. The Church will continue to provide for counseling sessions to support these survivors on

their journey of healing. As each person and the circumstances surrounding the offense committed against them is different, a variety of other means may also be employed to assist them to gain healing and peace.

Has the Diocese ever opened its files for examination by civil law enforcement?

Yes, in 2002, the diocese allowed Lucas County Prosecutors to examine our personnel files of clergy accused of sexual abuse of minors. In 2004 and 2005 the Diocese of Toledo opened the files again at the request of Lucas County Prosecutors.

Does my offertory donation to my parish or donations to the Diocese of Toledo go toward any settlement fund or abuse-related legal fees?

No. All payments of monetary settlements, counseling assistance and associated legal fees come from specifically established reserves, not from the general funds of the diocese, the Annual Catholic Appeal nor the offertory donations of parishes.

Will the Diocese release information on priests and deacons who have been accused of sexual abuse?

On our diocesan [website](#) we provide a current list of the names of accused clerics with a substantiated allegation, a practice which began in 2003.

How will the diocese address the issue of sexual abuse in the Church going forward?

The Diocese of Toledo is committed to respond promptly and compassionately and to offer care to victims, to report the abuse of any minor to law enforcement, to treat swiftly and justly allegations of abuse, to ensure the integrity of the priesthood, to discipline offenders and to take ongoing action to prevent abuse.