

Frequently Asked Questions

How has the Church responded to the sexual abuse crisis?

At their 2002 summer meeting following further revelations of child sexual abuse in the Church, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops developed the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#), a comprehensive set of guidelines and in the legally binding [Essential Norms](#) procedures, for addressing allegations of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy as well as addressing reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. The Charter was revised in 2005, 2011 and 2018. You are invited and encourage to read the Charter at the link below:

[READ CHARTER](#)

For more information on how the Catholic Church nationally is implementing the Charter and Essential Norms, you may view the USCCB CYP Annual Report at the link below:

[VIEW REPORT](#)

For more information on how the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph is implementing the Charter and Essential Norms, you may view the OCYP Annual Report at the link below:

[VIEW OCYP REPORT](#)

What is the Office of Child and Youth Protection?

Per the Charter and Essential Norms, the [Office of Child and Youth Protection \(OCYP\)](#) serves persons who bring forward allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy or by lay employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. In addition, the Office of Child and Youth Protection oversees local compliance with policies and procedures created to prevent child sexual abuse as well as receives and investigates reports of abuse.

How do I report abuse?

The Ombudsman receives and investigates all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult perpetrated by an employee, volunteer, priest or deacon in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

When you have reasonable cause to suspect sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, you must call:

1. The [Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.392.3738](#), if the victim is under the age of 18

2. The [Missouri Adult Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1.800.392.0210](#), if the victim is a vulnerable adult
3. [Local law enforcement or 911](#) if you believe the person is in immediate danger

Following the call to civil agencies, you are asked to report to the [Ombudsman 816.812.2500](#), if the suspected abuser is an employee, volunteer, priest or deacon in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. All reports pointing to criminal behavior will be reported to the proper civil authorities, who will conduct the primary investigation. The Ombudsman's protocol will assist the processes and protocols in determining whether the accused is suitable for employment, volunteer service, or ministry.

[What is an Ombudsman?](#)

The traditional meaning of an Ombudsman is a liaison between an organization and its members to resolve complaints. The Ombudsman for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph serves to ensure full reporting and cooperation with law enforcement and to help promote transparency and accountability of investigations into allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by an agent of the Church. The Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph was the first to create the Ombudsman role as applied to reporting and investigation of sexual abuse of a minor. See the OCYP annual report for Ombudsman statistics.

What steps are in place to prevent abuse?

The diocese's [Safe Environment Program](#), managed by the [Office of Child and Youth Protection](#), requires all adult employees and volunteers who work with or near minors and/or vulnerable adults to comply with the following policy requirements:

- Attend a [VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children for Adults](#) workshop and complete online updates.
- Read and sign the diocese's [Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Code of Conduct Policy](#).
- Complete a national criminal record check and agree to regular updates.

In addition, the [Circle of Grace](#) program is taught annually to students grades Pre-K-12 in diocesan schools and parish school of religion programs so that they are prepared to protect themselves from potential abuse as well as help create a culture of well-being for their friends and families, too.

[Are lay people involved in reviewing accusations? What is the Independent Review Board?](#)

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is received, lay people are involved in each step of the process, including reporting the allegation to law enforcement, conducting the diocesan investigation and reaching out with assistance to the individual making the allegation.

The Independent Review Board (IRB) is made up mostly of lay people experienced in various disciplines related to child protection. The IRB serves as a confidential, consultative body to the bishop. This board assesses allegations of sexual abuse of minors and reviews diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors.

Who is involved in mandated reporting?

The Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph believes that **all** adults have a moral obligation to report suspected abuse, regardless of mandated reporting laws.

Per the Mandated Reporter Statute (Section 210.115, RSMo.), certain people are required to immediately report to the [Missouri Division of Social Services Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-392-3738](#) when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or when they observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which may result in abuse or neglect. These mandated reporters include:

- Physicians, medical residents/interns, nurses, other health care practitioners
- Psychologists and mental health professionals
- Social workers
- Daycare center or other child-care workers
- Teachers, principals, or other school officials
- Clergymen or priests (except for information learned in the Sacrament of Confession)
- Peace officers or law enforcement officials
- Other persons with the responsibility for the care of children
- Any other person may report suspected abuse if such person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect.

Please note that reporters are protected from any adverse actions or sanctions for making such report, and multiple mandated reporters with knowledge of abuse or neglect may call together to make a single report.