

# Glossary of Terms

**Audit:** The diocese submits to a yearly third-party assessment of our implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and Essential Norms. In addition, parishes and schools of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph are audited periodically by the Office of Child and Youth Protection to ensure compliance with Charter, Essential Norms and Diocesan safe environment requirements.

**Boundary Violation:** A complaint that violates the Diocesan Code of Ethical Conduct.

**Charter:** Refers to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and Essential Norms that was approved in Dallas in 2002 and by the Holy See. It is a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy as well as guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse.

**Who is a minor in the Charter's view?** In both civil and canon law a minor is anyone under the age of 18. Until 1994, under Canon Law, a minor was considered any person under the age of 16. In 1994, Canon Law was changed for dioceses/eparchies of the USCCB so that anyone under the age of 18 was considered to be a minor. In 2001, it changed for the universal church.

**Civil Authorities:** Refers to the local law enforcement agency, whether it be the city police department, the sheriff's department, the state police or an area child protection agency. It is distinguished from religious authority.

**Dismissal from the Clerical State:** A permanent penalty imposed in response to the commission of an ecclesiastical crime. A priest or deacon can also lose the clerical state voluntarily by requesting it of his own accord from the Holy See, often called "laicization," but which more properly should be referred to as a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In either case, the priest or deacon is no longer counted as a cleric and now has the status of a lay person. Among the consequences of his new status is the fact that he is not able to function as a priest or deacon or to present himself as one publicly.

**Laicization:** See "Dismissal from the Clerical State."

**Minor:** A person under the age of 18. Also see "Who is a minor in the Charter's view?"

**Prayer and Penance:** The Charter recognizes that there might be cases where a priest or deacon has either admitted to a past act of abuse or has been found guilty of one, but dismissal from the clerical state does not occur. This could happen, for instance, when a priest is seriously ill or of advanced age. Under these circumstances a life of prayer and penance is imposed on the priest instead. In these cases, just as in laicization, he is forbidden from all public ministry and from otherwise presenting himself

as a priest. He is expected to dedicate his life to praying for victims and repenting of his past offenses. In this way, the Church seeks to prevent any future abuse and to repair the injustice that has already taken place.

**Removed from Ministry:** See “Dismissal from the Clerical State” or “Suspension.”

**Safe Environment:** Term used to refer to a wide assortment of practices that contribute to preventing child abuse of any kind.

**Suspension:** The priest or deacon is not permitted to function in public ministry. However, suspension does not remove the cleric from the clerical state. He remains a member of the clergy even if he is not exercising any functions associated with it. Additionally, suspension is not a permanent penalty--it is imposed so long as the reasons for its imposition remain.

**USCCB:** Acronym for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

**Victim/Survivor:** A person who has abuse of any kind in their background and has or is working to overcome the negative effects of that abuse.

**Vulnerable Adult:** Any adult who has reached age 18 who would be considered uniquely susceptible to abuse because of “a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want to otherwise resist the offense,” including any person forced, “by violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts.” (m.p., *Vos estis lux mundi*, 2019)