

# So There is No Doubt



## The Catholic Church is

# Committed to Protecting Children

### **You Can Help**

You can help prevent the abuse of children. Know the warning signs of offenders. They prefer to be with children. They go overboard touching, wrestling, or tickling. They may give minors alcohol or drugs, or show them pornography. They allow children to break the rules. Offenders act as if the rules do not apply to them.

If you observe an adult who is not behaving appropriately with children, speak up. Let someone know what you saw. You are not accusing anyone of anything. You are letting someone know you care, are watching, and are concerned that no harm is done to a child.

### **You Can Get Help**

Abuse is never the fault of the person harmed. It is always the responsibility of the offender. The reality is that most victims of abuse know their abuser. One in four females and one in six males report being abused as a minor.

If you or someone you know is a victim of abuse there are things you can do, even if the abuse happened years ago. Call the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.392.3738 if the victim is currently under the age of 18. Call local law enforcement or 911 if you believe a child is in immediate danger. If the abuser was or is currently in a position of authority in an organization, you should also report the abuse to that organization.

If the abuse was perpetrated by an employee, volunteer, priest or deacon in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, contact the Ombudsman, Jenifer Valenti at 816.812.2500.

## **The Charter**

In Dallas in June of 2002, the bishops of the United States adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The *Charter* is the plan of action developed by the bishops to address the clergy sexual abuse scandal.

### **Part One—To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Abuse**

The wording of the Charter is very clear on the importance the bishops place on their responsibility to help victims find healing and reconciliation. It states, “The first obligation of the Church with regard to victims is for healing and reconciliation.” Outreach takes a variety of forms including extensive therapy, apology meetings, spiritual retreats, and Masses for healing. In 2016, outreach was provided to 1,760 victims and their families.

### **Part Two—To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors**

All dioceses are to report allegations of sexual abuse of minors to public authorities. All clergy who have been found guilty or admitted guilt are permanently removed from ministry. There are clear standards of behavior and appropriate boundaries for all clergy, employees, and volunteers.

### **Part Three—To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures**

The mission of the Bishops' Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People is to advise the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on all matters related to child and youth protection. The Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection was established in 2002 by the USCCB. The National Review Board is a consultative body that reviews the work of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and advises the president of the USCCB. In addition, each diocese has a review board to advise its bishop in his assessment of allegations and in his determination of a cleric's suitability for ministry. To prove their commitment to accountability, dioceses undergo an annual audit conducted by an outside auditor.

### **Part Four—To Protect the Faithful in the Future**

Dioceses train clergy, employees and volunteers to create and maintain safe environments for children. The backgrounds of clergy, employees, and volunteers are evaluated to determine if someone should be allowed around children and young people.

Over 2 million parish employees and volunteers, and 4.2 million children have been Safe Environment trained to recognize the behavior of offenders and what to do about it. Training was also provided to 159,764 educators, 258,978 other employees, 35,475 priests, 16,294 deacons, and 6,847 candidates for ordination.

Background evaluations have been conducted on over 2 million parish volunteers and Church personnel who have contact with children.

Seminary screening has been tightened and transfers among dioceses of clergy who have committed abuse against minors are forbidden.