

2004 Audit Executive Summary

Diocese of Jackson
Bishop Joseph N. Latino
Previous Audit Conducted October 20 - 24, 2003

The information found herein represents conditions as they were found to exist during the week of August 30 – September 3, 2004.

Findings

To Promote Healing and Reconciliation (Articles 1, 2 and 3)

The diocese has a policy on the prevention of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. The diocese provides outreach designed to offer pastoral care to victims/survivors and their families. The bishop or his representative has met with, or offered to meet with all victims/survivors who have reported allegations of abuse since the last compliance audit. The bishop or his delegate has directed outreach to all faith communities in which the sexual abuse occurred. The diocese has a mechanism in place to respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor occurred.

The diocese has a victim assistance coordinator, Mrs. Linda Raff, who holds a Masters in Social Work and has extensive social service work experience including working with sexual abuse victims. The diocese established in 1994 a Review Board that consists of six members. The members include one active and one retired attorney. Three other members are professionals in the field of psychology, one the director of a mental health institute, and the other two licensed clinical psychologists, one in private practice, and the other the chairman of the psychology department at a local university. The final board member is a registered nurse with experience dealing with sexually abused minors. Two diocesan priests, the Vicar General and the Promoter of Justice, attend meetings of the Review Board but are not voting members. The Board serves as a confidential consultative body to the bishop.

The procedures for making a complaint of abuse are readily available in printed form, and are the subject of periodic public announcements. The diocese has not entered into any confidentiality agreements during the audit period.

To Guarantee Effective Response to Allegations of Abuse of a Minor (Articles 4, 5, 6 and 7)

The diocese reported all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor to public authorities since the last compliance audit. The diocese complies with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities. The diocese has established effective liaison with civil authorities, ensuring that an open dialogue regarding sexual abuse allegations will occur. The diocese cooperates with public authorities about reporting in cases when the person is no longer a minor. In all instances, the diocese advises

victims/survivors of their right to report allegations of abuse by a member of the clergy to civil authorities.

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation, in harmony with canon law, is initiated. If a preliminary investigation so indicates, the diocese notifies the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and applies the precautionary measures mentioned in CIC, canon 1722, or CCEO, canon 1473. When accusations against a priest or a deacon are proven to be unfounded, the diocese takes steps to restore the good name of the priest or deacon.

When sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or a deacon is admitted or established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, diocesan policy provides that the offending priest or deacon are permanently removed from ministry. The diocese offers professional assistance to offending priests or deacons.

In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law are observed. Accused clergy are encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the diocese supplies canonical counsel to a priest or deacon.

If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied, the diocese directs the offender to lead a life of prayer and penance. The diocese does not allow the offender to celebrate Mass publicly, to administer the sacraments, or to present himself publicly as a priest.

The diocese has established clear and well-publicized standards of ministerial behavior for priests and deacons. A communications policy is in effect which reflects the bishop's pledge to be open and transparent on issues regarding the sexual abuse of children. The diocese does assist and support all parish communities directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving minors.

To Protect the Faithful in the Future (Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17)

The diocese has fully implemented a "safe environment" education program. The educational program for children is a self-developed program that is integrated into K-12 grades of parochial school and Confraternity of Christian Doctrine training; the educational program for parents, ministers, educators and others is "Training the Trainers". The diocese has clear and well-publicized standards of conduct for persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse. The diocese conducts background evaluations for all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors, using appropriate law enforcement resources where permissible. The diocese employs adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination.

The diocese has not transferred any priest or deacon who has had a credible allegation of sexual abuse made against him to another ministerial assignment since the last audit. The diocese has not transferred any priest or deacon who has had a credible allegation of sexual abuse made against him to another diocese for residence since the last audit.

The bishop, or his designee, has coordinated with major superiors of men with a presence in the diocese concerning the issue of allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. The diocese is open to participation in research with other institutions in the area of sexual abuse but has not had the opportunity to do so. The diocese has developed a systematic ongoing formation program in keeping with the *Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*.

Compliance with the Provisions of the Charter

At the conclusion of this compliance audit, the Diocese of Jackson was found to be compliant with all articles of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.