



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

MOVING FORWARD IN FAITH:

Renewing Our Commitment to Victim Assistance, Child Protection, and Priestly Integrity

Bulletin No. 3

May 2011

Introduction

This is the third in a series of periodic bulletin inserts developed by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to provide information to parishioners. Each bulletin insert will focus on action steps the Archdiocese has taken to assist victims, advance the protection of children, and ensure the integrity of the Priesthood.

Victim Assistance Efforts in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Prior to the 2005 Grand Jury Report

- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (<http://bit.ly/USCCBCharter>) in June of 2002. This document required all (Arch)Dioceses to provide the following components of assistance to victims of sexual abuse:
 - *Article 1:* Dioceses are to reach out to victims/survivors and their families and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being. The diocesan bishop or his representative is to offer to meet with victims and their families.
 - *Article 2:* Dioceses are to have policies and procedures in place to respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred. Dioceses are to have a competent person or persons to coordinate assistance for persons who report having been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel.
 - *Article 3:* Dioceses are not to enter into settlements which bind the parties to confidentiality unless the victim/survivor requests confidentiality and this request is noted in the text of the agreement.
- As part of its initial response in 2002, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia identified several employees from Catholic Social Services available to provide assistance to victims.
- At that time, the Archdiocese also changed the process for reporting allegations of sexual abuse by removing that responsibility from the Office of the Secretary for Clergy. This change eliminated the need for victims to make a report to a member of the clergy.
- The responsibility for receiving reports from victims and other parties was entrusted to victim assistance staff.
- The Archdiocese established a “clergy status” page on the Archdiocesan website (<http://bit.ly/AOPClergystatus>) in order to provide publicly detailed information regarding clergy with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse against them.

The Expansion of Victim Assistance Efforts in the Archdiocese After the 2005 Grand Jury Report

- In January 2006, Cardinal Justin Rigali hired Ms. Mary Achilles, an advocate for victims with over 25 years of experience at the local, state, and national levels, who had served as the first-ever Victim Advocate for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania under three governors. Ms. Achilles was brought on as a consultant to advise on the response of the Archdiocese to victims of sexual abuse by clergy and Church personnel.
- Working through December 2008, Ms. Achilles assisted Cardinal Rigali with a broad expansion of the Archdiocese’s Victim Assistance Program. Actions taken at that time included:
 - The establishment of the Office for Child and Youth Protection in June 2006 to combine safe environment training efforts, which had been in place since 2003, for all clergy, employees, and volunteers with victim assistance services.
 - The creation of a dedicated toll free line (1-888-800-8780) for victims of sexual abuse by clergy and other Church personnel in need of assistance.

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- The simplification of the process of providing financial support for counseling expenses. The Archdiocese utilized a framework for services established by the *Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Crime Victim's Compensation Program*.
 - The provision of victim services in the most accessible possible manner, including enhanced counseling services, reimbursement for travel, child care expenses, and a simplified process for verification of services rendered.
 - The distribution of press releases to all local media outlets, posting of the same to the Archdiocesan website, and parish announcements when a priest, deacon, employee, or volunteer was removed.
 - The launch of a public outreach campaign to victims of clergy sexual abuse through print, audio, and electronic media.
 - The distribution of letters to alumni of high schools where substantiated allegations of abuse occurred in order to inform, offer support, and encourage any victims to come forward.
- In September 2006, Cardinal Rigali required all priests of the Archdiocese to attend "Witness to the Sorrow". Three adult survivors of clergy sexual abuse spoke of their experiences before the entire body of Archdiocesan priests at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. The event was broadcast live on the Archdiocesan website to enable as many victims as possible to view it. The video is archived at (<http://bit.ly/AOPWitnessToSorrow>).

Further Enhancements to Victim Assistance

Efforts in the Archdiocese Following the 2011 Grand Jury Report

- Soon after the release of the February 2011 Grand Jury Report, Cardinal Rigali rehired Ms. Mary Achilles as a Victim Services Consultant.
- Following Ms. Achilles' recommendation, the Victim Assistance Program eliminated the "Prohibition to Report" document. Its purpose was to ask a victim (now an adult) to provide signed documentation that they had instructed the Archdiocese not to make a report of abuse to law enforcement.
- The Victim Assistance Program has developed new policies and procedures utilizing the *Consolidated Victim Services Programs Standards of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency* as a guide. These policies have been written to implement proven methods, which include:
 - the restructuring of victim intake guidelines and
 - the reformulation of documenting reports of allegations.
- On February 16, 2011, the creation of the position Delegate for Investigations separated the process of investigating allegations of sexual abuse from the Victim Assistance Program.
- As a result of this procedural change, Victim Assistance Coordinators are now able to focus primarily on providing immediate and long-term support to victims.
- The Archdiocese is actively exploring opportunities to further enhance services for victims which would be separate from the administration of the Church.
- The Archdiocese has contracted with Network of Victim Assistance in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, to provide further training in the area of mandatory reporting for approximately 22,000 clergy, employees and volunteers. This initiative goes beyond current requirements for institutions under Pennsylvania law and is in addition to the Safe Environment training previously provided through VIRTUS.

If you are an adult survivor of child sexual abuse and need assistance, please contact the Victim Assistance Program at 1-888-800-8780 or philavac@adphila.org.