
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children

Preface

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is committed to addressing instances of abuse against all persons. However, this particular document sets forth the policy of the Diocese relative to sexual abuse of children. In doing so, it will necessarily deal with matters of a technical or procedural nature. From the outset, however, it must be clear that, in every instance of such abuse, the primary concern of the Diocese is pastoral: the well being of all persons involved, especially children.

The first consequence of every instance of abusive behavior is that a number of persons suffer in some particular way. The victims of such behavior, those who commit the acts, the families of victims and perpetrators alike, and the community itself all experience harm of some kind. While each person or group may be affected in ways different from the others, all suffer a real and frequently terrible pain.

The Diocese deplores the tragedy of this human suffering, and is determined to do what it can to prevent the incidents which cause it. When such incidents do occur, it will do its best to discern what assistance may be most appropriate and helpful, and then to make that available, as far as possible, to the affected persons. It will discourage any fruitless blaming and vindictiveness and seek to be the agent of healing and reconciliation wherever possible. It will allow no other goal to obscure its desire to relieve the burden of human suffering which accompanies every expression of this tragic behavior.

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Policy

1.0 Policy. Sexual abuse by the personnel of the Diocese is abhorrent to Christian principles and is contrary to and outside the scope of the duties of and employment of all paid and volunteer personnel of the Diocese. Accordingly, all personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston must comply with applicable state and local laws regarding incidents of actual or suspected sexual abuse, and with the requirements delineated in this document.

This policy does not address sexual abuse in general, but only in the special circumstances described below. It is intended to establish requirements and procedures in an effort to prevent child sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese and the resulting harm to others while the work of the Diocese is being performed. It is further intended to provide guidance to the personnel of the Diocese on how to respond to allegations of sexual abuse if any do occur.