

Diocese of Manchester  
Diocesan Review Board Report  
Audit Report 2007

The Diocese of Manchester's Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal, Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People ("Policy") provides that on a regular basis, the Diocesan Review Board ("Board") will conduct an audit of the Office for Ministerial Conduct ("OMC"). In its February 23, 2007 Diocesan Review Board Report, the Board had four recommendations. The Board noted that all four recommendations were completed in the period after the last review. In February 2008, as outlined in recommendation number four from the 2007 Board report, the Board, with the assistance of a CPA Consultant, created a Compliance Audit Instrument ("Instrument") for purposes of periodically reviewing the OMC's compliance with the Policy.

In conducting its review and developing its findings, the Board has reviewed compliance reports issued by the Diocesan Compliance Coordinator, thoroughly reviewed the "Assessment of Diocese of Manchester's Compliance Program for the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office" prepared by the Attorney General's designee KPMG LLP dated January 15, 2008 and received March 28, 2008, reviewed Action Plan III dated April 25, 2008 created in response to the January 15, 2008 report prepared by KPMG LLP, and reviewed other information assembled by a CPA consultant to the Board.

In addition, a member of the Board separately interviewed the Bishop of Manchester, the Delegates for Ministerial Conduct, the Safe Environment Compliance Coordinator, and other members of the Office for Ministerial Conduct in order to inquire about their specific responsibilities and their evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of the safe environment program.

The Board finds that additional progress and program sustainability have been accomplished. Since 2002, the OMC has revised existing and established new policies, programs, and procedures to ensure the safety of children in the Church, and these policies, programs, and procedures are continually being reviewed and improved, as necessary. The Board notes that there has been an enhancement in the working relationship with the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office. Unfortunately, creating public awareness of this progress and the complexities of the Church's outreach toward those who have been harmed continues to create challenges.

The Policy is administered by devoted men and women, and the Board is grateful for their continued dedication and service to the Catholic Church of New Hampshire.

The Board has made three recommendations, two of which relate to the continued enhancement and oversight of the safe environment database. The Board also recommends that it conduct another review of the diocesan records in the fall of 2009.

## I. Screening of Church Personnel

The OMC has continued to perform detailed reviews of the safe environment files at various parishes, schools, and camps through the year. The Board receives and reviews a summary of every site revisit completed as well as a monthly report of the Compliance Coordinator. The Compliance Coordinator also provides the Board with an annual summary of the compliance work completed by the OMC.

The OMC has also developed a mechanism to ensure that at least once every three years, all parishes and schools are reviewed for compliance with the screening and training requirements of the Policy. The two diocesan camps are reviewed annually.

The Board finds that the work of the OMC is extremely thorough and that the Office has demonstrated a commitment to ensure compliance with the Policy, not only in the diocesan administration, but also in the parishes, schools, and camps. In particular, the Board notes that in the site re-visit summary reports dated July 2007 and July 2008, the Compliance Coordinator for the period January 2007 to June 30, 2007 (Year 1) re-visited 12 parishes and 4 schools and for the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 (Year 2) re-visited 37 parishes and 6 schools. In addition, 3 spot checks were completed from January 2007 to June 30, 2007, and another 6 spot checks were completed from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008.

In Year 1, the Compliance Coordinator noted that 13 of the 16 sites re-visited showed an improvement in their compliance (2 remained constant and one had a lower result) with the safe environment requirements. In Year 2, the Compliance Coordinator noted that 20 of the 43 sites re-visited showed an improvement in their compliance (19 remained constant and 4 had a lower result). Those sites needing follow-up were scheduled for additional visits in order to provide assistance and/or for further review. The Compliance Coordinator also summarized test results from the Year 2 site re-visits. This analysis indicated that the rate of error (an error is an item missing or incomplete in a volunteer or employee file) related to the attendance at a *Protecting God's Children* session was 1.22% and the error rate for criminal records was .70%. Overall, the analysis indicated that the majority of those individual files reviewed were compliant. The Board finds these results to be the result of the continued communications and enhancements to the safe environment program of the diocese.

## II. Assignments of Priests and Deacons

The Board reviewed a list of all assignments and/or transfers of priests and deacons in 2007 and found that no priest or deacon who has admitted or been found guilty of sexual abuse of a minor has been assigned to any pastoral ministry.

The Board also selected 10 priest personnel files from the list of all assignments and/or transfers of priests and deacons in 2007 and determined that no information contained in their personnel files was inconsistent with the assignment and/or transfer approved by the Bishop. The Board found no discrepancies during this review.

### **III. Training of Personnel**

The Compliance Coordinator reports continued progress in the timely compliance with the required safe environment training for church and school personnel.

In 2007, the Diocese of Manchester, in consultation with an expert, developed an evaluation form for its existing safe environment training program, *Protecting God's Children*. A total of 1,306 responses were gathered between May 15 and September 15, 2007. These responses were tabulated and show that 94.5% of respondents rated the training to be beneficial. We find that the program continues to be effective in raising awareness of the preventable tragedy of sexual abuse of minors and the process for reporting it under law and diocesan policy.

In addition to *Protecting God's Children* training, the OMC has issued a Refresher Training Bulletin to provide ongoing or refresher training to those Church personnel who regularly work with minors. The Board finds the distribution of this document to be an effective way of reminding Church personnel of the information learned during *Protecting God's Children* training, including how to make a report of sexual abuse of a minor.

While it is not required under the Policy, the Board also commends the OMC for offering effective and current personal safety training for all minors enrolled in diocesan schools and parish religious education programs and for offering other resources to children and their parents.

### **IV. Intervention and Reporting of Incidents, Allegations and Concerns**

The Diocese has established procedures for the reporting of incidents of sexual abuse of minors by Church personnel to the New Hampshire Attorney General's office and when applicable, to the NH Division for Children, Youth and Families and local law enforcement. Under the diocesan procedures, all reports of sexual abuse of a minor are also reported to the Chair of the Diocesan Review Board and discussed at the next Board meeting. This process allows the Board to ensure that reports are made in a timely manner to the authorities in accordance with the Policy and NH law. The Board finds that the OMC has reported all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by Church personnel to the New Hampshire Attorney General's office and in accordance with the Policy.

The Board also found that on a quarterly basis, the reports of sexual abuse made to the Diocese have been compared and reconciled with reports from the Diocese to the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office and that no discrepancies were noted.

During the review of the various procedures and reports prepared by the OMC, the Board found that during the period of review, no priest was required to be removed from ministry, as the OMC had not received any allegations with a semblance of truth of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest who was in ministry.

## **V. Documentation**

The Diocese has established a policy on the retention of records related to allegations of sexual abuse of minors. Based upon questioning personnel and examination of records, the Board finds that documents related to allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Church personnel have been maintained in accordance with diocesan policy and the 2002 Agreement with the Attorney General's Office.

## **VI. Communication and Oversight**

The Office for Ministerial Conduct continues to use a variety of means to communicate with those responsible for safe environment and the public. The diocesan website, [www.catholicnh.org](http://www.catholicnh.org), contains a prominent Child Safety section with information about the reporting process, safe environment programs, child safety policies, public reports, and other helpful resources and links. The Child Safety section of the website is constantly being updated and includes the most up to date information available. For example, in April 2007, the website featured articles, programs, and other resources for Child Abuse Prevention Month. The OMC continues to hold annual state-wide safe environment conferences for all Safe Environment Coordinators, Safe Environment Council members, pastors, principals, and others involved in the safe environment efforts. In February 2008, the OMC issued a final Safe Environment Newsletter. In its place, every two weeks, the OMC publishes an article, reminder, bulletin announcement, or other resource in the diocesan e-newsletter, which is distributed to pastors, principals, parish, school, and diocesan staff, and all interested persons.

The Compliance Coordinator with assistance from the Safe Environment Assistant and other trained reviewers, have completed site review re-visits to 49 of 102 parishes and 10 of the 24 schools in the diocese since January 2007. The remaining locations that were all initially categorized as "satisfactory" in 2006 will be revisited prior to June 30, 2009. The Compliance Coordinator has also completed "spot checks" and follow-up visits at those parishes and/or schools that may need additional monitoring as some parishes and schools continue to face challenges in complying with the Policy.

Based upon the review of the summaries from the various site revisits completed since the last Board report in February 2007, it is the Board's belief that the OMC has created a thorough review process to ensure continued monitoring in the future. The OMC, through the Safe Environment Coordinator, has created a process that has established mechanisms for ensuring compliance and review for years to come.

## VII. Recommendations

The Board made four recommendations in its 2006 review, and the Board found that all four have been adopted by the Office for Ministerial Conduct.

The following are the Board's recommendations based on its 2007 review:

1. The Board recommends that the OMC complete the enhancements to the safe environment database to facilitate the automatic notification of pastors and safe environment coordinators when an employee and/or volunteer is not compliant with the requirements of the Policy.
2. The Board recommends that the OMC with the assistance of a consultant perform periodic analysis of the safe environment database to ensure that the controls established are working effectively.
3. The Board recommends that another audit report be prepared and issued in the fall of 2009. This report should include a recommendation for the nature and timing of future reports to the Christian faithful.

It is the opinion of the Board that the Diocese has demonstrated in tangible ways a high level of commitment to the continuation and improvement of the Policy as demonstrated by the extremely high levels of compliance with and acceptance of its various requirements. This opinion is reinforced by observation by the Board of an increase in the resources dedicated to the maintenance and improvement of the program by the OMC. The lack of complaints from the Attorney General's Office since the last Board audit reinforces the conclusion that the protection of children and young people has the highest priority of the Diocese at all levels. The OMC is to be commended for its considerable effort in this endeavor.