

June 27, 2018

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci  
Diocese of Manchester  
153 Ash Street  
Manchester, NH 03104

Re: 2017-18 Diocesan Review Board Audit

Dear Bishop Libasci:

The Diocese of Manchester's *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal* Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People provides that on a regular basis, the Diocesan Review Board will conduct an audit of the Office for Ministerial Conduct.

For its most recent audit, the Board decided to focus on the annual safe environment on-site review findings, and in particular, the results of the 2016-2017 parish and school visits. The Board sought to determine how the results of that year's on-site reviews compared with prior years' results and make recommendations accordingly.

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present you with the enclosed report. Our findings included the determination that compliance levels have remained fairly consistent over the past few years. Our analysis of the data indicated that in recent years, most parishes and schools remained steady or improved in their compliance, but each year, a few tend to decline in compliance. The Board members who conducted the audit attempted to identify reasons why some parishes or schools may, on occasion, struggle with compliance. The enclosed report includes some possible answers and recommendations for assisting parishes and schools that may need additional support in order to maintain satisfactory compliance with diocesan safe environment policies and procedures.

The Board wishes to thank the parish Safe Environment Coordinators who provided feedback and members of the Office for Ministerial Conduct for their assistance in conducting this audit. The staff of the Safe Environment Office was found to be attentive and aware of the safe environment status of all parishes and schools within the diocese. The auditors found their knowledge to be excellent and their efforts to help all parishes and schools to be exceptional.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the audit report or recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Christine O'Hara Tremblay, Chair  
Diocesan Review Board

# **DIOCESAN REVIEW BOARD AUDIT REPORT**

## **MAY 2018**

In accordance with the *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal* Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People (“Policy”), during the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018, the Diocesan Review Board (“DRB”) conducted an audit of the Diocese of Manchester Office for Ministerial Conduct. Following discussions at the September 2017 DRB meeting, the Review Board decided that the audit would focus on parish and school compliance with respect to the screening and training requirements of the Diocese of Manchester *Screening and Training Protocol for Church Personnel*. The protocol requires all adults who “regularly” (6 times a year or more) work with minors to complete sexual abuse awareness training and a criminal records check within 30 days of beginning their work with minors.

### **Audit Procedure**

The following steps were taken by a subcommittee of the DRB consisting of Mark Collopy and Robert Carey, Esq. in order to determine the current status of parish and school compliance with screening and training requirements for adults who work with minors:

1. Because the staff of the diocesan Safe Environment Office visits and audits for compliance each parish and school approximately every three to four years, the auditors reviewed the statistical results from parish and school safe environment review visits conducted over the course of the past four years. It is important to note that approximately 35 entities are visited in the course of any given year.
2. Mr. Collopy visited the diocesan Safe Environment Office and observed the organizational system for parish and school safe environment files. Then, a random sampling of 10 files representing large parishes, small parishes, and schools was selected and reviewed.
3. Interviews were conducted with the diocesan Safe Environment Assistant and with 8 Safe Environment Coordinators, 6 of whom work or volunteer at parishes or schools found to be in need of improvement following their most recent safe environment compliance review visit. The purpose of these interviews was to learn what challenges the parishes and schools may face and what might be done to help them improve.

### **Findings**

1. After a parish or school undergoes a safe environment review visit, it receives a safe environment “rating” of either Excellent, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory. In examining overall ratings from the past four years’ worth of reviews it was found that, in terms of safe environment compliance, an average of 81% of parishes and schools typically improve or remain in the same ratings category each year. In a typical year, 20% (representing approximately 7 locations) decline in their compliance

rating. Overall, this trend did not raise concerns, because the data showed that the largest portion of the groups had improved or remained satisfactory each year, while a decline could consist of movement from an excellent to a satisfactory rating, which is still acceptable. Still, the goal of the Diocese is and should be for all parishes and schools to achieve a rating of at least “Satisfactory.”

2. The filing system at the safe environment office was found to be organized, accessible, and efficient. Each parish and school has its own designated binder. Groups that held a less than satisfactory rating were isolated so they could be reviewed regularly and updated by staff. The system in place keeps the file documentation for each parish and school relevant, while maintaining a solid historical perspective.
3. Staff of the safe environment office were found to possess a high level of knowledge of each parish and school in the diocese and each group’s respective Safe Environment Coordinator. The Diocese has not only implemented a process for compliance checks and follow-up procedures for groups falling below the standard, but has also implemented a centralized electronic online portal for each individual coordinator to access.
4. In their interviews, coordinators raised a variety of challenges they face that could result in compliance difficulties. Areas mentioned fell in to four main areas. First, parishes that chartered Scout packs had difficulty when the leaders were not organized or helpful in getting their volunteers to cooperate with training and screening (The Scouts have their own safe environment training program, but they also need to complete the diocesan program). Second, some of the coordinators felt they could use more training and more pastoral support to enforce compliance. Third, parishes undergoing significant changes or transition had a hard time managing volunteers. For example, one parish was integrating a large, local community—a welcome development. However, the coordinator had experienced some challenges educating this new group on the need to complete training. Fourth, there were some coordinators who had difficulty managing the online system, but this was not a universal complaint; in fact, most coordinators thought the program was easy to use. All said that the Safe Environment Office was responsive and a great resource.

Finally, one parish interviewed had maintained an “Excellent” rating. That parish, one of the larger ones, has two safe environment coordinators. But the parish’s success was because it relied on good ‘habits’ that made compliance easier, such as entering the names of volunteers into the online system before they started their work with minors, staying in contact with ministry leaders, and refusing to charter a Scout troop until the members complied with diocesan requirements.

## **Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the Diocesan Director of Safe Environment Programs meet with a representative of the Daniel Webster Scout Council in order to devise a plan for ensuring that Scout volunteers understand the importance of complying with diocesan screening and training requirements. If an individual troop is not cooperative, the sponsoring parish

should refuse to charter them.

2. The staff of the Safe Environment Office should continue to work closely with any parish or school that receives a less than satisfactory rating. Priority should be given to these parishes/schools in an effort to improve their implementation of the Policy. Strategies for intervention should include more frequent visits to the parish or school; a request for the pastor or principal to assign a new or assistant coordinator; and mandatory additional training for staff at those entities falling below the standard.