



Promise to Protect

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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When did the Diocese of St. Petersburg start checking the backgrounds of employees, volunteers and clergy to determine if they pose a risk to children and vulnerable adults?

On April 15, 1992, the diocese began the requirement of background screening and fingerprinting of all employees and clergy, as well as volunteers who have the care, responsibility, and/or supervision of children and youth. Beginning in July of 1997, the diocese also required those having the care, responsibility and/or supervision of vulnerable adults (i.e. elderly, disabled, etc.) to also be screened and fingerprinted. All employees and clergy, as well as all volunteers, who have the care, responsibility, and/or supervision of children and youth, are required to be re-screened every five years.

How many people have you screened since this started?

Since 1992, the Diocese of St. Petersburg has completed background screenings on 75,000 priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers entrusted with the care, responsibility and/or supervision of minors or vulnerable adults, as well as contractor and vendors working in close proximity to these persons.

How does someone report abuse?

Anyone who has been abused is urged to call law enforcement and the Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873. Anyone aware of abuse is mandated by the state to call law enforcement and the Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873. We also urge anyone abused by Church personnel (clergy, a church employee or volunteer) or a contractor/vendor, to call the Diocese of St. Petersburg's Victim Assistance Minister, John Lambert, LCSW. He can be reached by phone at 1-866-407-4505 or by email at jl@dosp.org. He is available to coordinate pastoral care and offer assistance. Instructions on how to file an abuse complaint can also be found on the following webpage:

<https://www.dosp.org/safe-environment/how-to-file-an-abuse-complaint/>

Are clergy allowed to continue in their ministry after a credible allegation of abuse?

No person, including clergy, who has been determined to have engaged in sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, will be allowed to remain in active ministry.

What happens to clergy who are credibly accused of abuse?

Clergy who are credibly accused of sexual misconduct with a minor are removed from ministry pending an investigation. A report is made to the State Attorney having jurisdiction. Announcements are published at the parishes where the priest or deacon served inviting anyone who has been harmed to come forward to law enforcement, DCF or the Victim Assistance Minister. The results of the investi-

gation are presented to the Diocesan Review Board, who makes a recommendation to the bishop that the allegation seems to be true, seems to be false, or is unsubstantiated. If the bishop finds the allegation seems to be true the priest is removed from ministry.

How can we be sure our bishop does not allow clergy to remain in ministry who are guilty of abuse?

The bishop follows the norms of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter, which requires that no credibly accused member of the clergy is permitted to remain in active ministry.

He is assisted by an independent Diocesan Review Board, which is comprised mostly of lay persons not employed by the Diocese. The Board reviews all accusations of sexual misconduct with a minor.

How do you determine if an allegation is credible?

A consistent investigation process has been established and is followed. The Diocese uses an outside investigator, who is a former FBI agent and the results of the investigation are then presented to our Diocesan Review Board.

What support do you provide for victims?

When an allegation is made regardless of any finding on the merits, our response is to offer pastoral care and assistance and to assist in the healing process while the investigation is pending. We have been able to achieve reasonable settlements, not for legal reasons, but because the Church should offer care and assistance for those who have been harmed by someone serving in the ministry.

How does the Diocese pay for victim pastoral support and legal settlements?

Insurance policies cover all claims associated with these areas. All diocesan insurance policies are managed through an Insurance Trust Fund with a Board of Trustees comprised of clergy and lay members. This is a very important effort that requires good stewardship because of the responsibility required to support all diocesan activities. The Insurance Trust Fund charges parishes and schools for this insurance, purchases reinsurance, and pays all claims. We fully realize that all the funds to cover insurance costs come from our parishioners and we must make every effort to properly insure for all liabilities.

How do we find out about what priests of the Diocese of St. Petersburg have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor?

The Diocese of St. Petersburg lists the names of clergy and lay persons who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor on the diocesan website here: www.dosp.org/safe-environment/credibly-accused-individuals.

For more information visit
<https://www.dosp.org/accountability>



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