



Diocese of Rockford

Policy and Procedure for Reporting Sexual Abuse of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult

I. Policy.

The Diocese of Rockford is committed to maintaining an environment that encourages and fosters appropriate conduct and respect by and among its clergy, employees, and volunteers, as well as an environment that is safe for children, vulnerable adults, and all individuals. The Diocese of Rockford prohibits sexual abuse in all its forms and does not tolerate, condone, or allow such conduct perpetrated by clergy, employees, or volunteers of the Catholic Diocese of Rockford.

II. How to Report Sexual Abuse.

a. Contact law enforcement.

A report of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by clergy member can be made to the sheriff's department of the county in which the abuse occurred, or to the police department of the city, town, or village in which the abuse occurred. The Diocese encourages all victims and survivors of sexual abuse to make a report to law enforcement. The Diocese cooperates with all law enforcement agencies investigating an allegation.

b. Contact DCFS.

If a victim or survivor of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by a clergy member is still a minor, a report should be made to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) by calling its hotline number: 1-800-25-ABUSE. That report may be made by the minor, the minor's parent or legal guardian, a witness to the abuse, or a mandated reporter. The Diocese cooperates with DCFS in its investigation of an allegation.

c. Contact the Diocese.

A report of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult can be made to the Diocese by writing to the Diocese of Rockford, Office of Diocesan Intervention, P.O. Box 7044, Rockford, IL 61125; by calling the Diocese's confidential hotline number: (815)293-7540 and leaving your name and phone number; or by writing an email to reportsexualabuse@rockforddiocese.org.

III. The Response of the Diocese.

a. Outreach Services will be made available.

When a victim survivor makes a report of sexual abuse to the Diocese's hotline number or email address, a victim advocate will contact the victim survivor within 24 hours. Usually a call back will occur that

same day. The role of the victim advocate is to reach out to the victim survivor, listen and offer assistance in whatever way is comfortable and beneficial for the victim survivor. The victim advocate will listen to whatever the victim survivor wishes to share. The victim advocate will not prod for details. Where deemed appropriate, the victim advocate will offer counseling or therapy to a victim survivor, spiritual assistance, and/or where available, support groups and other social services that may be available, which, in the sole discretion of the Diocese, may be funded in whole or in part by the Diocese.

b. The Report of Sexual Abuse will be investigated.

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult is made to the Diocese of Rockford, the allegation will be reported to law enforcement and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) if the victim or survivor is still a minor, as the law requires.

Unless law enforcement decides to investigate the report, the Diocese will begin an investigation into the report promptly, and with objectivity, fairness and justice. If law enforcement decides to investigate, the Diocese will instead refrain from investigating so as not to interfere with law enforcement's investigation.

An independent investigator assists in the process of investigating a report of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by a clergy member, employee, or volunteer of the Diocese. The role of the independent investigator is to gather details from the victim survivor, such as the location, the date or year, whether witnesses or others have knowledge of the abuse, and a description of the wrongful acts. The investigator is a retired law enforcement officer, not employed of the Diocese, who volunteers his services to the Diocese for this purpose.

The Diocese Review Board will review all the information obtained in the investigation including from the investigator and the victim advocate. The Review Board may request more information where appropriate. On completion of the investigation, the Review Board will make recommendations to the Diocesan Bishop for final review and action. If a report of sexual abuse is substantiated, the name of the priest shall be identified publicly on a list published by the Diocese on its website.