

NEW THIRD-PARTY REPORTING SYSTEM FOR ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS OR VULNERABLE ADULTS BY A BISHOP OR EPARCH

In the wake of revelations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons by living bishops (active or retired) or eparchs in the past two years, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has established a reporting system accepting allegations of sexual misconduct against minors or vulnerable persons by such bishops. This “reporting system is known as **Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service** or **CBAR**. Its website is www.ReportBishopAbuse.org. Its toll-free telephone number through which individuals can file reports regarding a bishop or eparch is 800-276-1562.

This nationwide system is being implemented by individual dioceses under the direction of the local bishop. The information gathered will be protected through enhanced encryption.

The purpose of the **Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR)** is to provide a third-party service for gathering and relaying to appropriate Church authorities reports of the following kinds of misconduct:

- A U.S. Catholic bishop who has:
 - forced someone to perform or to submit to sexual acts through violence, threat, or abuse of authority;
 - performed sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person;
 - produced, exhibited, possessed, or distributed child pornography, or recruited or induced a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions;
- or, a U.S. diocesan or eparchial bishop, or other cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a diocesan or eparchial bishop, who, in the exercise of their office, intentionally interfered with a civil or Church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious.

All **other** complaints against bishops, such as theological concerns, liturgical abuses, church closings, priest assignments, etc., **are beyond the scope of this reporting service.** Such complaints should not be made through this reporting service. It is for **sexual abuse or misconduct only** as described above.

If you wish to report sexual abuse or misconduct by clergy or Church personnel **other than a bishop**, please contact your diocesan / eparchial Victim's Assistance Coordinator instead. In the Diocese of Trenton, the Victim's Assistance Coordinator is Maureen Fitzsimmons. She can be contacted by leaving a confidential message with your name and call back information at 1-888-296-2965 or via e-mail at abusehotline@dioceseoftrenton.org. For further information, please access www.dioceseoftrenton.org, link "Updates on Measures to Address Sexual Abuse."

Although Church authorities who receive reports of the sexual abuse of a minor and certain other crimes will report them to civil authorities as required by law, this service is not intended as a substitute for calling the police. **If you feel that you are the victim of a crime, please contact local law enforcement immediately.**

Regarding alleged abuse by bishops, your report to CBAR must include:

- the name of the U.S. Catholic bishop you are reporting;
- a description of the allegation, the place where it occurred, and the timeframe of when it occurred, as best you can remember.

It will be helpful if the report also includes as many relevant details as possible, such as the names of other individuals involved, as well as dates, times, known circumstances, or other information useful to assess the facts of the situation.

- You will be given an access number and personal password that can be used to follow-up on the status of your report. The service can provide automated status reports at a very general level, but it can also provide a confidential avenue of communication for asking more detailed questions about status.
- Your report will be forwarded to the proper Church authority, usually a Metropolitan archbishop (or a Senior Suffragan bishop if the report is about the Metropolitan, or if the Metropolitan See is vacant). All of the information you provide will be forwarded without any editing or revisions.

- At the same time, your report will be forwarded to a lay person who has been designated to assist the bishop in receiving reports.
- Some reports, such as those involving minors, will be reported to law enforcement.
- The Metropolitan (or Senior Suffragan) and designated lay person will review the report.
- The Metropolitan will then send your report to the Apostolic Nuncio along with an initial assessment.
- The Apostolic Nuncio will then send your report and the Metropolitan's initial assessment to the appropriate authority within the Holy See.
- Within thirty days, the Holy See will determine if a formal investigation is warranted. If so, it will authorize a bishop to oversee the investigation.
- If an investigation is ordered, it will be undertaken by qualified experts, including lay persons. Normally, the investigation is to be completed within 90 days of receiving the order from the Holy See.
- Once the Holy See receives the conclusions of the investigation, the Holy See will initiate the appropriate process that will lead to a final judgment.