

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

<b>Title: Communications Procedure Regarding Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Protected Individuals by Diocesan Personnel</b>		
Document Storage Location/Source: Diocesan Chancery		
Originator:	Approving Position:	Document Number:
Victim Assistance Coordinator (“VAC”)	Local Ordinary	<b>1</b>
Name: Amy Cordon	Name: Very Rev. Tom Ranzino, VG	Effective Date: May 31, 2020
Signature:	Signature:	Last Edited Date: DNA

**1. Purpose**

This standard operating procedure (“**SOP**”) of The Roman Catholic Church of the Diocese of Baton Rouge (“**Diocese**”) shall govern the communication of information regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults (“**Protected Individuals**”) to the public and others in compliance with *Article 7 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

**2. Scope**

A. This SOP shall apply to the communication of information to the public and others upon the occurrence of one or more of the following matters:

- (1) A priest, deacon, employee or volunteer of the Diocese, or a member of a religious order (“**Religious**”) assigned to the Diocese, (collectively, “**Diocesan Personnel**”) resigns as the result of an allegation made against such person of sexual abuse of a Protected Individual (“**Allegation**”), or
- (2) The bishop of the Diocese (“**Bishop**”) takes action (“**Action**”) against Diocesan Personnel who is the subject of an Allegation (the “**Accused**”), or
- (3) An Allegation or Action becomes public knowledge.

B. Upon the occurrence of a matter listed in Paragraph 2.A. above, the Diocese will make public only the following information related to such matter:

- (1) The name of the Accused;
- (2) The current assigned ministry of the Accused, if any;
- (3) The location where each incident of sexual abuse is alleged to have occurred;
- (4) The designation of the Allegation as sexual abuse of a minor (including, without limitation, child pornography) or a vulnerable adult;
- (5) The approximate time frame of the alleged sexual abuse;
- (6) Whether the Accused denies or admits the Allegation;
- (7) The current status of the Accused (i.e., alive or deceased);
- (8) The date on which the Diocese received the Allegation; and
- (9) The Bishop’s decision as to the credibility of the Allegation and the appropriate action to be taken (i.e., the final disposition).

C. The Diocese will communicate the information listed in Paragraph 2.B. above to the following recipients:

- (1) By a personal announcement made to the parishes, parish communities, and any other constituencies directly affected by the Accused's ministry;
- (2) In any manner to other priests, pastoral administrators, diocesan employees, diocesan offices and agencies, the affected superior (if the Accused is a Religious), parishioners at large through the diocesan website and the official publication of the Diocese (currently, *The Catholic Commentator*), and others.
- (3) Once the communications in Subparagraphs 2.C.(1) and (2) above have been completed, the information may be reported to the greater community through the secular news media.
- (4) The Diocese is committed to openness and transparency regarding allegations of sexual abuse of Protected Individuals with due regard for the privacy and reputations of all persons involved. The Diocese will make every effort to guard the identity of each alleged victim.
- (5) While an investigation is underway, the Diocese generally will not publicize further details about an Allegation beyond those stated above, even if the complainant or the Accused makes a public statement concerning it.
- (6) When the Bishop takes final action concerning an Allegation following his receipt of a recommendation from the Independent Review Board, his action may be publicized at his discretion in a statement released in the following order, to the extent reasonably possible, through the mediums listed below:
  - (a) Internal communications (e.g., to affected parishes, clergy, pastoral administrators);
  - (b) *The Catholic Commentator*;
  - (c) Diocesan website;
  - (d) Social media (with link to diocesan website);
  - (e) Addition to diocesan list of credibly-accused clerics; and
  - (f) Secular news media.

### **3. Responsibilities**

The Bishop is the official spokesperson for the Diocese. Its Communications Director serves as the main media contact and as spokesperson for the Bishop on issues involving sexual abuse of Protected Individuals by Diocesan Personnel. The local ordinary administers the diocesan *Communications Procedure Regarding Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Protected Individuals by Diocesan Personnel*.

**News media inquiries regarding allegations of sexual abuse of Protected Individuals shall be directed to contact the diocesan Communications Director at telephone number (225) 387-0561.**

### **4. Materials**

Materials relevant to Allegations made against Diocesan Personnel shall consist of documented information gathered from the following sources of the Diocese: its VAC, Director of Clergy Health,

Independent Review Board, Pastoral Review Team, Local Ordinary, Bishop and any other person designated by the Bishop.

**5. Related Documents**

- A. The Diocese's *Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults by Diocesan Personnel*;
- B. The USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (and its Norms)*; and
- C. The *Code of Canon Law* of the Catholic Church.