



# ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PATERSON

OFFICE OF CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION  
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Greetings to all the Faithful of the Diocese of Paterson,

With the recent release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report involving the Catholic Church, I would like to take this opportunity to make you aware of the efforts and education that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson implements to ensure that our children are safe from sexual abuse.

First, on behalf of the Office of Child & Youth Protection and our Victim Assistance coordinator, I want to extend our heartfelt apologies and prayers to those who were abused in the past by anyone associated with the Diocese of Paterson.

The Diocesan Office of Child & Youth Protection was created in 2003 with the mission of preventing the crime of sexual abuse. I began volunteering as a "Protecting God's Children" child protection facilitator/trainer in 2006 for our diocese, conducting over 300 classes to date. As of November 2017, I accepted the position as Director of the Office of Child & Youth Protection. I was a police officer for 31 years before retiring as the Deputy Chief of Police for Jefferson Township. I continue to use my law enforcement background to protect children in this very important Diocesan ministry.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, (USCCB), issued the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002. In the Charter, the term "minor" had been expanded to include "vulnerable adults. "Vulnerable adult" is defined as "a person who is at least 18 years of age with an intellectual disability and including the elderly." The Charter has undergone revisions over time, most recently in June of 2018, and has also been complemented by Norms approved by the Vatican, which have the full force of law in the Church.

We train our clergy, as well as women and men religious, employees, teachers, and including roles such as catechists, coaches, youth ministers, volunteers, etc. in the Diocese for the important work of creating and upholding a culture free from sexual abuse. Please read more about our policies and programs at [www.rcdop.org](http://www.rcdop.org).

Our ongoing goal is simple, to create a safe environment for our children & youth. Below are the steps, programs and statistics to date that we have implemented to provide a safe environment for our children & youth.

Yours in Christ,

Eric F. Wilsusen  
Director, Office of Child & Youth Protection

## **What Steps has our Diocese taken to protect children & youth?**

Our diocesan Office of Child & Youth Protection visits every location in the Diocese to ensure that appropriate child safety protocols are in place. The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops engages an independent, unbiased entity to audit each diocese in the country and publically releases the results. Since 2003, our diocese has voluntarily submitted records and data. These audits are completed by paper with "onsite audit" every third year. In addition to the USCCB Charter audits, the diocesan Office of Child & Youth Protection holds all locations accountable with internal audits. We visit and audit each parish or school every three years.

### **Children's Training**

The Diocese makes use of the Virtus "Teaching Touching Safety" program for training all of our children in grades one & four in our parish religious education classes and in grades one through twelve in our Catholic Schools. (Parental opt-outs are allowed). **The Virtus training is grade and age appropriate. Our numbers latest diocesan audit numbers count 37,089 students as having attended the Virtus Safety class.**

### **Adult Training**

In the Diocese of Paterson, it is required that anyone who has regular recurring contact with children & youth including all clergy, deacons, seminarians, diocesan employees, parish employees, and school employees, regardless of their positions, attend a sexual abuse prevention workshop. All volunteers who have contact with minors or vulnerable adults must also attend the training.

For this purpose, the program Virtus: Protecting God's Children for Adults has been mandated for use in the Diocese of Paterson. Since 2003, this training has been offered in our parishes and schools on an average of 70 times a year for a total of over 32,577 people trained. Presently, there are over 25 facilitators throughout the Diocese who are trained as Facilitators. They volunteer their time and talent to present this training all over the diocese.

**2017 audit figures for the Diocese of Paterson indicate that 1,587 adult personnel have attended sexual abuse awareness and prevention training.**

### **Code of Pastoral Conduct**

Every volunteer and employee working with children are required to read and acknowledge our code of conduct. The code of conduct states the rules for appropriate adult behavior with children.

## **Background Checks**

The Diocese of Paterson conducts mandatory background checks for all personnel who have regular recurring contact with minors or vulnerable adults.

The Diocese requires that all employees of Catholic schools must submit:

- Fingerprint background checks for New Jersey and FBI criminal files submitted through the NJ Department of Education
- An internet background check
- National Sex Offender Registry

Clergy, deacons & seminarians must submit:

- Fingerprint background checks for New Jersey and FBI criminal files submitted through the New Jersey State Police which includes a check of the National Sex Offender Registry.

All Volunteers having regular reoccurring contact with children & youth must submit an internet background check which covers:

- State and national criminal files
- National Sex Offender Registry
- In addition, our current provider currently contains over 1 billion records from over 1500 different sources to help ensure we have the most complete background check picture.

Any personnel found to have a criminal conviction of the following, is barred from employment or volunteering in any entities of the Diocese of Paterson, its parishes and schools & Catholic Charities:

- Conviction of any Sexual Offense.
- Conviction of any offense of a child including but not limited to sexual abuse, abuse neglect, abandonment, and cruelty, endangering the welfare of a child.
- Offenses involving the manufacture, transportation, or distribution of a controlled dangerous substance or drug paraphernalia;
- Offenses involving the use of force against a person or property, including, but not limited to, robbery, aggravated assault, stalking, kidnapping, arson, manslaughter, and murder;
- Luring, enticing a child into a motor vehicle, structure or isolated area;
- Any of the following types of offenses if the conviction (or guilty plea) occurred within the last ten (10) years: Resisting arrest; Offenses involving the possession or use of a controlled dangerous substance or drug paraphernalia; Offenses involving firearms or other weapons; Recklessly endangering another person; Offenses involving the threat of force against a person or property; Terroristic threats; Criminal restraint; Causing or risking widespread injury or damage; Criminal mischief; Burglary; Threats and other improper influence; Escape; Assault; Battery.

### **Diocesan Review Board**

The Diocese of Paterson Review Board functions as a confidential consultative body to the Bishop and advises him in the assessment of allegations of sexual abuse. The Board is comprised of law enforcement, medical & mental health professionals as well as other lay professionals. Other diocesan officials attend the meetings as required. This board meets whenever an allegation is received, and a minimum of two times a year, even in the absence of allegations.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

In 2002 the Diocese of Paterson has entered into an agreement with the three County Prosecutors Offices that serve our Diocese that requires our Diocese to report any crimes of a sexual nature. Since its inception in 2002, in practice, the Memorandum of Understanding has evolved to include all crimes, not just crimes of a sexual nature.

In the Diocese of Paterson, all reports of crime and/or potential crimes are immediately reported to the appropriate County Prosecutor.

### **Local Youth Protection Coordinators**

Each parish, school and Catholic Charities organizations are required to have assigned a local youth protection coordinator. The purpose of this position is to ensure compliance of our Diocese Safe Environment policy at their location. The local youth protection coordinator maintains a list of volunteers and employee working with children at their location and ensure all have had a background check, read & acknowledged the Diocese Code of Conduct and attending a Protecting God's Children session.