

POLICY ON SEXUAL ABUSE BY CHURCH MINISTERS**Diocese of San Diego**

The Diocese of San Diego recognizes that sexual abuse by Church ministers constitutes one of the most serious breaches of trust in human relationships. It can have devastating consequences above all for victims and their families, but also for the Church ministers involved and for the Church community at large. Therefore, to prevent abuse and to maintain a safe environment for children, to deal appropriately with allegations and cases of abuse, and to respond compassionately to victims of abuse, the Diocese of San Diego sets forth this policy.

The Diocese of San Diego is committed to prevent sexual abuse and to maintain a safe environment for children and young people by:

1. publishing standards of conduct for Church ministers who have regular contact with children and young people;
2. screening applicants for ordained and lay Church ministry which involves regular contact with minors;
3. promoting “safe environment” programs in collaboration with parents, educators and community leaders.

The Diocese of San Diego is committed to deal appropriately with allegations and cases of sexual abuse by:

1. announcing procedures for reporting complaints of sexual abuse;
2. responding promptly to all allegations of sexual abuse;
3. offering immediate pastoral care to persons who claim to have been sexually abused as minors and to accused ministers;
4. complying with the requirements of civil law in reporting allegations of sexual abuse to public authorities and cooperating with their investigation;
5. engaging a review board to assist in addressing allegations of sexual abuse;
6. temporarily relieving alleged offenders of their ministry, when there is the probability of sexual abuse, in accord with Church law;
7. following procedures that reflect a commitment to transparency and openness, within the confines of respect for the rights and the reputation of the individuals involved;
8. permanently removing offenders from ministry, when it is admitted or established that a criminal offense of sexual abuse has occurred, in accord with Church law;
9. taking steps to restore the good name of persons cleared of false allegations.

The Diocese of San Diego is committed, above all, to reach out with pastoral concern and care to victims of sexual abuse and their families, and to promote healing and reconciliation with them.