

Archdiocese of Seattle

Sexual Abuse Prevention Background Information

We know that Catholics and others have questions in light of recent events that have brought fresh attention to the tragedy of clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

As Archbishop Paul D. Etienne shared in his October 2019 statement, the sexual abuse of a minor is an intrinsic moral evil and a crime, and anyone responsible for such an act, or for shielding those who do, including bishops and other Church leaders, must be held accountable for their actions.

The abuse scandal has touched virtually every Catholic diocese in the U.S., including the Archdiocese of Seattle. Because of the harm inflicted right here in Western Washington, the Archdiocese has instituted a number of measures to help ensure prevention of further abuse while increasing transparency and accountability. It is important for Catholics in this region to know of these efforts even as the Church continues to seek forgiveness for the crimes committed.

Prevention

- The Archdiocese of Seattle sexual abuse prevention, training and victim support efforts first started in the 1980s, more than two decades before similar safety and prevention programs became required for all dioceses in the United States.
- The Archdiocese's sexual abuse prevention and education training program (now called Safe Environment Training) was first established in 1990 and has been updated and enhanced several times since then. All clergy and Church employees are required to complete the training.

Reporting procedures/investigation process

- Robust abuse reporting procedures have been in place since 1987.
- A formal committee including lay subject matter experts in the field of sexual abuse was first established in the Archdiocese of Seattle in 1986. The Archdiocesan Review Board, as it is now known, reviews all allegations of abuse in the Archdiocese and provides important support and guidance for the Archbishop in this area.

Transparency

- In 2016, in an effort to be as transparent as possible with the issue, the Archdiocese, on its own initiative, chose to publicly issue a list of all clergy in this area for whom allegations of sexual abuse of a minor have been admitted, established, or determined to be credible.
- On two different occasions, the Archdiocese of Seattle proactively opened its confidential clergy files for review by independent outside organizations. The first occurred in the 1980s and was conducted by law enforcement. The most recent review was conducted in 2015 by a respected consulting firm with a strong background in law enforcement. This review resulted in the list of clergy referenced above. Archdiocese of Seattle 710 9th Ave. Seattle, WA 98104

While it is good that, since 2007, no new known instances of clergy sexual abuse have occurred in the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Church must nonetheless continue to hold itself accountable for past

failings and work ceaselessly to prevent future abuse. This work includes remaining constantly vigilant and prepared to respond without compromise to any complaint of sexual abuse by clergy that is reported.

To report any suspicion of abuse by any Church personnel, please contact local law enforcement. In addition, anyone who has knowledge of sexual abuse or misconduct by a member of the clergy, an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Seattle is urged to call the archdiocesan helpline at 1-800-446-7762.