

4) Safe Environment training for Children and Youth (Charter Article: 12)

This training empowers children by teaching them personal safety skills that help keep them safe from dangerous and abusive situations. Internet safety awareness is also taught. The following resources are used in parishes and schools:

- “Welcome to our Safe Environment” for Grades K-2
- “Welcome to our Safe Environment” for Grades 3 – 5
- “Personal Power—A Gut Check on Safety” for Grades 6+
- Child Lures® program for Grades K - 12

Parishes and schools advise parents each year that Safe Environment training will be presented. They encourage parental involvement in reinforcing what their children learn by being provided with information and materials so parents may fulfill their role as the “primary educators” of their children. For information call the Diocesan Office of Evangelization, Catechesis and Family Life: (518) 453-6630 or Catholic School Office (518) 453-6666.

5) Background Checks and Screening (Charter Article: 13)

All applicants to the priesthood and permanent diaconate are required to participate in comprehensive psychological screening and background evaluations to assess their fitness for the ministry and their fitness to work with minors.

All clergy, parish/school personnel and volunteers who have regular contact with children or youth must complete an application form, which requires references and acknowledgement of any prior conviction of a crime. They must also undergo a Social Security verification and criminal background check, which includes a check of the National Sex Offender Registry.

No one who has been convicted of sexual misconduct or found to have abused a minor may serve in the Diocese of Albany as a professional or volunteer in any capacity with children or youth.

See: <http://www.rcda.org/> (select Charter Compliance Tools and Resources)

6) Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policies (Charter Article: 6)

The Albany Diocese has implemented rigorous policies and procedures to provide a safe environment for all children and youth in our parishes and schools.

These include:

- **A Zero Tolerance Policy, which means that any clergy found to have sexually abused a minor is permanently removed from ministry.**
- **Guidelines for Appropriate Conduct / Professional Boundaries and a Code of Conduct to be signed by all diocesan clergy, staff and volunteers who have regular contact with Children and Youth.**
- **Code of Conduct for Youth Volunteers/Workers**
- **Technology Policy that prohibits misuse of the internet**
- **Liturgical Ministry Policy for known sex offenders**

See: <http://www.rcda.org/policy/PDFPolResAbuse.pdf>

7) Reporting Child Abuse

School faculty, administrators and other staff members are designated as mandated reporters in New York State. When one of these persons receives information leading to a “reasonable suspicion” that a child is being abused or neglected, he or she must make a report to the State Central Register (Child Abuse Hotline)

Mandated Reporters call: 1-800-635-1522

General Public call: 1-800-342-3720 to report suspected child abuse.

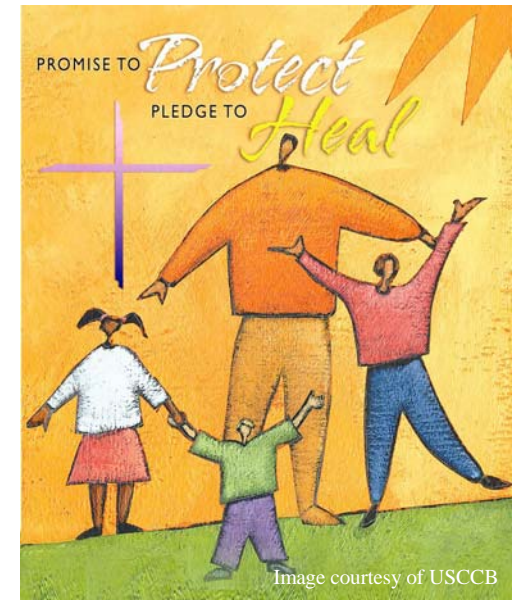
Note: If you are an adult who has been sexually abused as a minor by any clergy, staff or volunteer of the Albany diocese, please report the abuse to the DA’s office where the abuse occurred. To report it to the diocese and obtain counseling assistance, contact:

Assistance Coordinator at: 518-453-6646

E-mail: victim.assistance@rcda.org

Working Together

To Prevent Child Sexual Abuse



Our Commitment to Protecting Minors and Helping Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse



*Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany
40 North Main Avenue
Albany, NY 12203*

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

St. Paul tells us that when one member of the Body suffers, all suffer. I have witnessed firsthand the hurt, pain and long-term trauma that sexual abuse can cause, which is exacerbated when perpetrated by a trusted authority figure. To those who have been victimized and to their families, I extend my sincere apology. Also, I am aware of the anger, pain and loss of confidence the scandal has created in the minds and hearts of many people. For this, too, I apologize.

We have learned from the mistakes of the past and are committed to doing everything possible to make the protection of children and young people, healing for victims and their families, and the removal from ministry of any clergy or Church personnel who have abused their position of sacred trust an urgent priority for our Diocese.

This brochure is a helpful guide to the sexual abuse prevention policies, educational programs and resources that have been implemented in parishes and schools throughout the Diocese. In it, you will find information about creating safe environments, what to do and who to contact if you suspect or witness abuse or misconduct, how to obtain pastoral care for abuse victims and much more. Please read it carefully and keep it for easy reference.

Our children are our precious future. Let us all continue to work together to protect them from harm, especially that of sexual abuse.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Edward B. Scharfenberger
Bishop of Albany

Sexual Abuse of Minors

Children are our most precious and vulnerable resource. Tragically, child sexual abuse is a reality that has occurred in trusted institutions like the Church and schools and occurs in society at large. We as the “People of God” are called to work together to stop all forms of sexual abuse wherever they occur.

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

Church teaching condemns the sexual abuse of children and youth as seriously sinful. The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was adopted by the Bishops of the United States in June 2002. This important document contains the Church’s response to the problem of child sexual abuse and provides a concrete prevention plan. Key requirements of the Charter include:

1) Victims’ assistance coordinators to respond to the pastoral needs of those who have been injured by abuse. (Charter Articles 1, 2, 4, 12, 16)

The Albany Diocese is concerned about the well being of those who have suffered abuse and has a designated Assistance Coordinator to help anyone who has been sexually abused by clergy, religious or laypersons working or volunteering for the Diocese. We have learned that with assistance it is possible for individuals to heal from the effects of sexual misconduct. This is not easily accomplished and the path to healing is different for each person. We make every effort to respond fairly and compassionately to those harmed and to assist them in taking some steps towards their healing.

Call the Assistance Coordinator at (518) 453-6646 to:

- report misconduct by a priest, deacon or other person working or volunteering for the Diocese of Albany;
- access counseling assistance and tell your story in a supportive environment;

- report abuse by a member of a religious community and receive assistance connecting with the appropriate religious community;
- report abuses suffered in another diocese and receive assistance in connecting with the appropriate persons in that diocese.

All allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by diocesan clergy, staff or volunteers, where the accused is alive, are reported to the appropriate civil authorities while respecting the confidentiality of the victim. We encourage persons with an allegation of sexual abuse to report it directly to law enforcement authorities.

2) Safe Environment Coordinator (Charter Articles 2, 12 and 13)

The Human Resources Director of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany serves as the Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC). The SEC works with parishes and schools, to maintain a safe environment for children and youth. The SEC’s responsibilities include making sure that all clergy, staff and volunteers who regularly interact with children have been background-checked, and that these adults as well as children and youth have received safe environment training.

3) Safe Environment training for Adults (Charter Article: 12)

VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children”

All parish/school personnel and volunteers who have regular contact with children and youth are required to receive training in child sexual abuse awareness and prevention. Our Diocese uses a program titled VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children,” which teaches adults the five basic steps of child sexual abuse prevention.

See <http://virtusonline.org/virtus/>