

## Diocese of Fort Worth

### Policy Regarding Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor

The Diocese of Fort Worth is committed to eradicating the evil of sexual abuse of minors. When any allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor is received by the Diocese of Fort Worth, diocese officials immediately report the information to civil authorities (e.g., law enforcement or Child Protective Services). The diocese then takes steps to investigate the allegations (separate from any investigation by the civil authorities) to immediately determine whether the alleged incident is plausible (i.e., confirm whether the accused and accuser were in fact at the parish/school at the alleged time, etc.). If the allegation is found to be plausible, then the accused is immediately removed from ministry while the diocese conducts a further investigation to determine whether there is reason to believe that the sexual abuse of a minor occurred. The bishop of the diocese, in consultation with the Diocesan Conduct Review Board, makes the determination whether there is reason to believe that the alleged abuse occurred. The bishop is advised on this decision by the Conduct Review Board, which is a confidential consultative body composed mainly of lay members of outstanding integrity with good judgment who come various backgrounds and areas of expertise. A determination that there is "reason to believe" that the alleged abuse occurred is not a definitive finding that it actually occurred. Rather, it is a lesser standard (i.e., requires less evidence) than that required by our civil or criminal legal systems that, if met, impels the diocese to remove the accused from ministry permanently, unless the accused is subsequently cleared by the facts.

The Diocese of Fort Worth is fully committed to complying with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and to fulfilling its moral obligation to protect our children. You can learn more about the ways the Diocese of Fort Worth is helping to protect our children by visiting the Safe Environment page on the diocesan website <https://fwdioc.org/safe-environment>.

**The Diocese of Fort Worth invites anyone who has information about abuse or who has been abused by any priest, deacon, employee, or volunteer of the Church to contact us so that the Church can reach out to you or any victims. Please contact the Office of Victim Assistance at 817-945-9345; the Director of Safe Environment at 817-945-9334; or the Chancellor and Moderator of the Curia, Monsignor E. James Hart, at 817-945-9315. If a crime has been committed, we urge you to immediately contact the local law enforcement officials *before* contacting the diocese.**

For more information, including detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to report sexual abuse of a minor by clergy please visit <https://fwdioc.org/responding-to-victims>. For detailed information on how to report the sexual abuse of minor children by any person other than clergy (for example an employee or volunteer) please visit <https://fwdioc.org/report-abuse-concern>, where you may also file an electronic Confidential Notice of Concern to the Office of Safe Environment.