

Diocese of Fort Worth

Policy & Procedure Regarding Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult

The Diocese of Fort Worth follows the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and our moral duty to protect our children, youth, and vulnerable adults (adults who habitually lack the use of reason). The Diocese of Fort Worth encourages anyone who has information about abuse or anyone 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 the victim. If a crime has been committed, **we urge you to immediately contact the local law enforcement officials** before contacting the diocese.

For more information and detailed steps on how to report abuse, please visit these links:

- To report sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by clergy: <https://fwdioc.org/responding-to-victims> or call the Victim's Assistance Hotline at 817-945-9345
- To report sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by anyone else in the Church (employee, minister, or volunteer): <https://fwdioc.org/report-abuse-concern>
- To report other forms of abuse or neglect by anyone in the Church, including but not limited to physical abuse, harassment, threats, mental/emotional abuse, human/sex trafficking, and other forms of abuse: <https://fwdioc.org/report-abuse-concern>

You may also contact the following individuals for assistance:

The Director of Safe Environment, Sandra Schrader-Farry: 817- 945-9334; Assistant Director of Safe Environment, Patrick McGrail: 817-945-9341

The Vicar General/Moderator of the Curia, Very Reverend Jonathan Wallis: 817-945-9315.

In our commitment to eradicating the evil of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, the Diocese of Fort Worth follows the following steps when we receive any allegation of such abuse:

1. We immediately report the information to civil authorities including law enforcement and/or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
2. We promptly offer and provide outreach to victims and their families including pastoral and spiritual assistance. When appropriate, assistance may also include counseling or therapy for the victim and their family.
3. We investigate the allegation (separately from the civil authorities) to see if it is plausible (i.e., if the accused and accuser were at the same place and time, etc.).
4. If the allegation is plausible, we remove the accused from ministry while we investigate further to see if there is reason to believe that the abuse occurred.
5. The bishop, with the help of the Conduct Review Board, decides if there is reason to believe that the abuse occurred. *Under this policy "reason to believe" means that there is some evidence of abuse, it must not be a definitive finding that it actually occurred.
6. If there is reason to believe that the abuse occurred, we permanently remove the accused from ministry, unless the accused is subsequently cleared by the facts.

You can find out more about our Safe Environment program and policies at

<https://fwdioc.org/safe-environment>