



# Catholic Diocese of Richmond Office of Safe Environment *Annual Report* April 2019

## Letter from Bishop Barry C. Knestout

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to share with you the first report on the dedicated efforts and work by the staff within the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment. This report provides an overview and other important information about what this office does and our ongoing efforts to ensure we are doing all we can.

The safety of God's children, the vulnerable and bringing healing to anyone harmed by clergy sexual abuse is of the utmost importance to me. That is why we are committed to reinforcing the ongoing, mandatory training for all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers who work with minors and the vulnerable. We continue to implement the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* as well as diocesan policies and procedures for evaluating, reporting and responding to all accusations of abuse.

As shepherd of this local Church, I continue to express my sincere and deepest sorrow to all victims of abuse. The Office of Safe Environment and I remain ready to assist victims of sexual abuse in their journey toward healing and welcome the opportunity to meet with and provide pastoral care for them.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. May the grace of our Lord be with you and our Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop of Richmond



## Statement from Director of Safe Environment

*"To survivors of abuse, we want you to know we are here for you."*

As the Director of the Office of Safe Environment, I am committed to ensuring that this office is available to help victims in their ongoing healing from the transgressions of the past. We pledge to do all that we can to protect our children and the most vulnerable, which is why a large part of my role involves training through the VIRTUS: *Protecting God's Children for Adults* program.

The VIRTUS program is so fundamental to our shared understanding of child protection in the Diocese of Richmond that all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers working with minors and the vulnerable must review the *Code of Conduct*, attend a training session and complete a background check.

Over the last 14 years, there has been a concerted effort to strengthen this office to ensure we are meeting all the requirements set forth in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

Please read this report in order to learn of the vigilant work being done by our office.

Thank you.

Maryjane Fuller, Director of Safe Environment



Office of  
Child Protection  
Safe Environment



Catholic Diocese  
of Richmond

[www.richmondiocese.org/child-protection-safe-environment](http://www.richmondiocese.org/child-protection-safe-environment)



## Victim Assistance Coordinator

In the Spring of 2018, Jennifer Sloan joined the Office of Safe Environment as the on-site Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC). This role is mandated by the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* to work directly with abuse survivors and others who have been touched by abuse. The Diocese of Richmond has had an identified VAC since the inception of the *Charter* in 2002. Jennifer Sloan is the first VAC to assume this role in a full-time capacity.

Abuse survivors and their families can be connected to support resources by the Victim Assistance Coordinator as they work toward healing. In addition, the VAC is available to help victim survivors coordinate a meeting with the bishop.

Through the disclosure process, the VAC meets with survivors of sexual abuse to learn of their experiences and to identify appropriate healing resources. Working with the survivor, the VAC presents all relevant information to the Diocesan Review Board for an investigation. The VAC maintains regular contact with survivors in order to keep them updated throughout the Review Board process.

Eligible victim survivors can participate in service plans that address any treatment relevant to addressing the trauma associated with sexual abuse.

## Credible Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse

During the July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018 audit year, the Office of Safe Environment received three reported allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. One allegation, which occurred in the late 1960s, was found to be credible and substantiated during the audit year. The accused priest in the founded claim has been named on the clergy list published by the Diocese of Richmond in February 2019. At the close of the audit year, the other two allegations were still under review. Since that time, the allegations have been resolved and will be included in next year's annual report.

*\*\* Any allegation received as of July 1, 2018 will be reported on the July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019 audit. Founded allegations will appear in next year's annual report. \*\**

*"Parents need to be educated about child sexual abuse and be attuned to the behavior changes in their children. Do not be afraid to discuss this issue with your children. There are so many educational resources available to help you have these conversations. Now more than ever. An ounce of prevention is far better than a pound of cure."*

Dottie Klammer, R.N.  
Survivor & Advocate

*"What the diocese has done doesn't delete the memories and flashbacks. It doesn't delete the pain of the 10 years of childhood I lost or what was physically and emotionally taken by "him." But it does allow me to share my story, my pain, my hurt and have someone believe me.*

*"It has allowed me to trust and believe that they would use that information to help others like me and try to prevent other children from experiencing what I did – something I still suffer from some 60 years later.*

*"For everything the diocese has done on my behalf and for other victims/survivors/thrivers, I am so very grateful."*

Child Sexual Abuse Survivor

## Reporting Information

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond urges individuals who have been sexually abused by a priest, deacon, religious, lay employee or volunteer of the diocese to report abuse directly to law enforcement, including Child Protective Services (CPS) at 1-800-552-7096 and by calling the Attorney General's Clergy Abuse Hotline at 1-833-454-9064.

Individuals are also encouraged to contact the 24-hour confidential Victim Assistance Reporting number at 1-877-887-9603 or email [vac@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:vac@richmonddiocese.org) to report sexual abuse.

## Office of Safe Environment

The Office of Safe Environment receives and assesses reported allegations of sexual abuse and boundary violations related to children and vulnerable adults.

The office is also tasked with re-inforcing the ongoing implementation of policies and procedures that protect children and the vulnerable and ensure compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

This includes overseeing child protection training for all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers who work in any capacity with children or vulnerable adults in the diocese, as well as processing all required background screenings for these individuals.

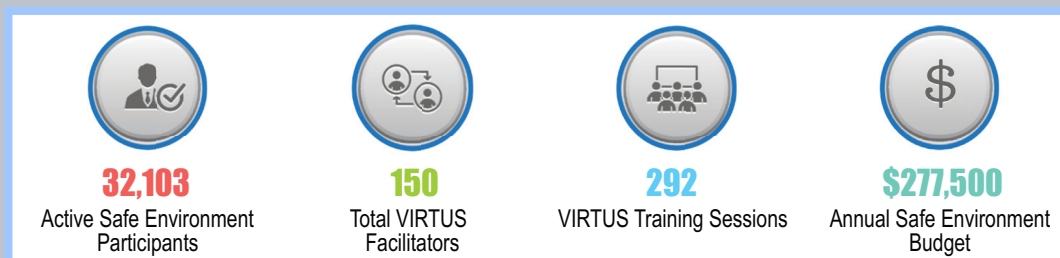
In addition, the office provides consultation to parishes and schools on best practices related to child protection regarding specific programs and activities. The office also completes compliance reviews to ensure that policies and practices are being implemented with fidelity.



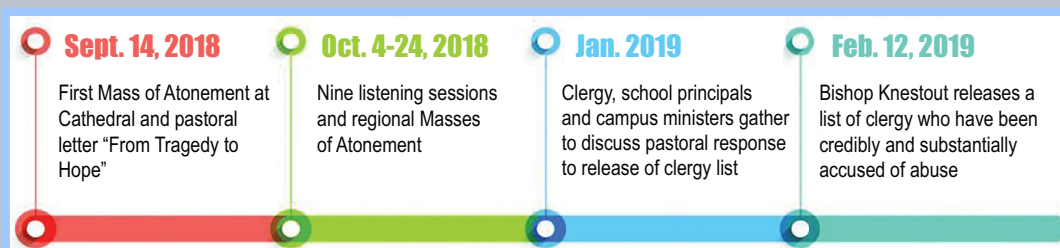
### Diocesan Review Board

The Diocesan Review Board assists the Bishop in assessing allegations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons by clergy and other church personnel and in determining the fitness for ministry of an alleged offender. The Review Board is composed of seven individuals — the majority of whom are lay persons not employed by the diocese — who have knowledge, insight or expertise in the protection of minors. The Review Board is comprised of three canon and/or civil lawyers, three licensed mental health professionals and one member of the clergy.

## Safe Environment Statistics 2017-2018



## Significant Dates in Our Pastoral Response



### *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* is a comprehensive set of procedures established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in June 2002, for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy.

In July 2002, the Diocese of Richmond developed the Diocesan Safe Environment Regulations, which provide the diocese with an official procedure to address abuse allegations.

The diocese is audited by an independent entity contracted by the USCCB annually and this year participated in an on-site audit, which occurs every three years.

Bishop Barry C. Knestout received notice of compliance for the July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018 audit period in a Nov. 29, 2018 letter.

## Contact Information

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