

So There is **NO** Doubt

The Catholic Church's
Solution to End
Clergy Sexual Abuse



In Dallas in June of 2002, the bishops of the United States adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The *Charter* is the plan of action developed by the bishops to address the clergy scandal. In 2005 they recommitted themselves to the demands of the *Charter* in a way that manifests their accountability to God, to God's people, and to one another. There are four parts to their plan of action.



Part One—To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victim/Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors.

The wording of the *Charter* is very clear on the importance the bishops place on their responsibility to help victims/survivors find healing and reconciliation. It states: “The first obligation of the Church with regard to the victims is for healing and reconciliation.” Outreach takes a variety of forms from extensive therapy, to apology meetings, to spiritual retreats and reconciliation services. In 2008, outreach was provided to 3,273 victims and their families. Bishops were sitting down with victims before Pope Benedict’s meeting with victims in Washington and continue to follow his lead in a sincere attempt to provide healing for the victims.

Part Two—To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors.

All dioceses are to report all allegations of sexual abuse of minors to public authorities. All clergy who have been found guilty or admitted guilt are permanently removed from ministry. There are clear standards of behavior and appropriate boundaries for all clergy, employees and volunteers.

Part Three—To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures

The mission of the Bishops' Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People is to advise the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on all matters related to child and youth protection. A Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection was established in 2002 by the USCCB. The National Review Board is a consultative body that reviews the work of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and advises the president of the USCCB. In addition, each diocese has a review board to advise its bishop in his assessment of allegations and in his determination of a cleric's suitability for ministry. To prove their commitment to accountability, dioceses undergo an annual audit conducted by an outside auditor.



Part Four– To Protect the Faithful in the Future

Dioceses are to train clergy, employees and volunteers how to create and maintain 'safe environments' for children. The backgrounds of clergy, employees, and volunteers are to be evaluated to determine if someone should not be allowed around children and young people.

Over 1.7 million clergy, educators, employees, and volunteers have been trained in how to create safe environments and prevent child sexual abuse. More than 5.7 million children have been prepared to recognize abuse and protect themselves. Criminal record checks have been conducted on 1.7 million volunteers and employees, on 163,763 educators, 52,000 clerics, and 5,580 candidates for ordination.

Seminary screening has been tightened and transfers among dioceses of clergy who have committed sexual abuse of minors are forbidden.



You can help

You can help prevent child sexual abuse. Know the warning signs of offenders: They prefer to be with children. They go overboard touching, wrestling or tickling children. They may give minors alcohol or drugs, or show them pornography. They allow children to break the rules. Offenders act as if the rules do not apply to them.

If you observe an adult who is not behaving appropriately with children, **speak up**. Let someone know what you saw. You are not accusing anyone of anything. You are letting someone know you care, are watching, and are concerned that no harm is done to a child.



You can get help

Sexual abuse is never the fault of the victim. It is always the responsibility of the offender. The reality is that most victims of sexual abuse know their abuser. It is frequently a family member or a trusted family friend. One in four females and one in six males report being molested as a minor.

If you or someone you know is a victim of child sexual abuse there are things you can do even if the abuse happened years ago. Call the police to report the abuse. If the abuser was in a position of authority in an organization, report the abuse to that organization. Call a sexual abuse crisis hotline.

If it happened in a Catholic church or school, contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the diocese. If you need help contacting the right person go to www.usccb.org/ocyp or call 202-514-5413 for assistance.

It is time to put the shame of sexual abuse where it belongs—on the offender. You can feel better. You can heal from sexual abuse.