

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON PROTECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Over the past 15 years, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (AOP) has put into practice a wide range of reforms to protect young people. In fulfilling our duty to protect children, our efforts are comprehensive:

- All people working with children, including volunteers, undergo criminal background checks and child-abuse clearances.
- All AOP clergy, staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children complete Safe Environment training programs and Mandatory Reporter training programs. More than 110,000 adults have received training to recognize, respond to, and report abuse since 2003.
- All young people in grades K-12 receive age-appropriate abuse-prevention education.
- All employees and volunteers who have contact with children are required to report suspicions of child abuse.
- AOP Office of Child and Youth Protection staffers develop policies and training programs based on the law, best practices and the AOP's "Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries" to clearly define acceptable and unacceptable conduct. These policies apply to all Archdiocesan clergy, staff, volunteers, parents, and members of parish communities.
- An active "Safe Environment program" is mandated within all of our parishes, schools, and youth programs for compliance audits and disseminating information and resources on child abuse prevention. There are 280 designated "Safe Environment Coordinators" diocese-wide serving parishes, schools and youth ministries.
- We encourage the general public to report *all* suspected child abuse by clergy or anyone associated with an AOP program to the Commonwealth's statewide Childline system (800.932.0313, toll free), to local police, and to the AOP Office of Investigations (888.930.9010, toll free).
- We require that our Office of Investigations (led by a former Philadelphia First Assistant District Attorney) handle allegations of misconduct and that every allegation involving minors be reported to law enforcement, logged, and reviewed to determine whether interim restrictions on ministry or employment are required.
- We refer all allegations against clergy members involving minors -- even those not related to abuse but solely involving violations of the AOP's "Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries" -- to the Archdiocesan Review Board (comprised of medical, former law enforcement, and other professionals in the field of addressing child abuse), which functions as an independent consultative body to the Archbishop.
- We submit to regular audits and the USCCB's annual report process, which allows independent auditors to evaluate the Archdiocese's youth protection efforts and response.

In addition to our efforts at abuse prevention, the Archdiocese also provides significant support for survivors of abuse and their families. This program encourages victims to come forward, no matter when the abuse may have occurred, and provides for independent counseling and other services. The Archdiocese has a permanent commitment to help abuse survivors heal. Relevant information can be found online through our Office for Child and Youth Protection at <https://childyouthprotection.org>, or by calling 1-888-800-8780.