

## **Diocese of Jackson: Child Protection Accountability 1950-2002**

### **What has the Diocese done regarding child protection?**

Since the mid 1980s the Diocese has had a policy concerning child abuse investigation and reporting. The policy has undergone revisions and supplementation for the last two decades. The most recent revision occurred in October 10, 2003 reflecting additions suggested by the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," which was approved by the Bishops in Dallas, June 2002 and the "Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests and Deacons," which was approved by Rome December 8, 2002. The policy can be found on our website: [www.jacksondiocese.org](http://www.jacksondiocese.org).

Over the past twenty years, the Diocese has developed and implemented a safe environment program. The Diocese has publicized standards of conduct for priests and deacons, as well as diocesan employees, volunteers, and any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people. The Diocese is conducting background evaluations for all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. The Diocese has not transferred any priest or deacon who has had a credible allegation of sexual abuse lodged against him to another diocese within the United States for ministerial assignment or for purposes of residence. The bishop, or his delegate, and the major superiors of religious orders have coordinated their respective roles regarding issues of allegations of sexual abuse made against a cleric member. The Diocese has established screening and evaluative techniques in the selection of candidates for ordination and ongoing formation programs for priests.

### **Who are the members of the Review Board?**

The Review Board consists generally of: a judge, two attorneys, a licensed clinical psychologist, a director of a mental health center, and a nurse with experience in dealing with sexual abuse of minors. There are three priests who are members of the board, one a licensed clinical psychologist; the other two priests have only a passive voice on the board. Members of the review board feel that they can do their job more efficiently if they remain anonymous. Except for three priest members, none of the review board members is employed by the Diocese of Jackson.

### **Why a survey?**

Recently, the Diocese participated in a confidential study commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The survey was designed to provide a "descriptive study . . . of the nature and scope of the problem including statistics" on perpetrators and victims. Even though the names of the victims and the alleged perpetrators were not disclosed, because of the privacy rights of victims and the alleged perpetrators, the Diocese insisted upon encryption of all information provided to John Jay College.

### **Why the period of 1950-2002?**

The period of 1950-2002 was chosen because that is the time frame the national survey by the John Jay College for Criminal Justice used. Results from that survey will be released on Friday, February 27, 2004 along with a report from the National Review Board, established by the bishops following the Dallas Charter.

### **What information did the Diocese report?**

Pursuant to the instructions of the survey, the Diocese reported only information regarding diocesan priests since religious orders were to make their own report. A diocesan priest is ordained for ministry in a particular diocese and is subject to the bishop of that diocese. A religious order priest is ordained for a particular religious community, such as: Franciscans, Sacred Heart Fathers, Divine Word Missionaries, Glenmary and Josephites. Religious order priests serve in missions all over the country and world. A religious order priest is subject to the religious superior of his order.

### **How many priests have served in the Jackson Diocese?**

Between the years 1950 and 2002, a total of 883 priests have served in the Diocese of Jackson. This figure includes 204 diocesan priests and 679 religious order priests. In addition, there have been numerous religious orders that sent brothers and other religious to serve the Diocese during this time period.

### **How many clergy have had allegations of sexual abuse of a minor lodged against them?**

The Diocese reported to John Jay College that between the years 1950 and 2002, 204 diocesan priests served in the Diocese of Jackson. The Diocese acknowledged that during this time period it received credible complaints of sexual misconduct with a minor against 10 diocesan priests.

During this 52 year period and outside this period, there were other claims lodged against diocesan priests, religious order priests, brothers, and priests of other dioceses serving within the Diocese of Jackson.

The Diocese has learned of one claim of sexual misconduct against a diocesan priest that allegedly occurred in 1938. One allegation against a diocesan priest was found to be incredulous and there was one investigation of a charge against a diocesan priest that was inconclusive. Credible claims were lodged against six religious order priests. The Diocese received one allegation against a religious order priest that worked within the Diocese but the alleged misconduct occurred outside the Diocese. One allegation against a religious order priest proved false. There have been two claims against brothers of religious orders who served the Diocese. One of the allegations occurred within the Diocese but the investigation was inconclusive. The other brother was accused of misconduct outside the

Diocese. In addition the Diocese received notice of misconduct of three priests ordained by the Diocese of Jackson but serving in other dioceses.

### **Where are these priests now?**

The names of accused priests have been released to criminal authorities whenever a credible allegation has been made. Because of the heightened awareness, the Diocese has received a number of accusations by victims within the last 18 months. However, these claims allege conduct occurring for the most part during the 1960s and 1970s. The most recent allegation of sexual misconduct allegedly occurred in the early 1980s. *In other words, the reports of sexual misconduct by clergy to the Diocese and the lawsuits currently pending against the Diocese do not involve any alleged misconduct after the early 1980s.* Some of these priests are dead; some have left the ministry or retired and do not have any priestly functions. A few of these priests have been laicized. No diocesan priest, deacon or religious order priest or brother who is currently serving within the ministry of the Diocese of Jackson has had a credible allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor made against him.

### **What has the church offered to those who made allegations?**

In all instances, after receiving complaints, the Diocese has offered pastoral care to the victims making accusations. In circumstances where there were found to be credible allegations of sexual abuse, the Diocese has offered pastoral and psychological counseling. The Diocese's best calculation is that the out-of-pocket counseling and other direct aid cost was approximately \$95,978 from 1981 to July 2002. Detailed financial records prior to 1981 could not be found. During the same time period, the Diocese has expended \$13,679 in legal fees relating to sexual misconduct claims.

### **Why won't the Diocese release the names of all those accused?**

The Diocese respects the rights of all involved in this tragedy. There are names in our files of innocent people – some accused of abuse and some victims who wish to maintain their anonymity. It would violate their right to privacy and possibly the First Amendment if the Diocese were to release all of these names. Those with credible allegations made against them have been removed from ministry, have resigned or retired, have died or have been laicized. Their names have been reported to the proper authorities.

### **What if my child is a victim of sexual abuse by a priest?**

You should report it immediately to the Mississippi Department of Human Services at 1-800-222-8000. After reporting to DHS, please notify the Diocese by contacting our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Linda Raff (601-355-8634), or Msgr. Michael Flannery, vicar general (601-969-1880).