

PROTECTING OUR *children and youth*

Safe environment policies and practices in the Diocese of Grand Rapids

- The Diocese of Grand Rapids encourages anyone who has been sexually abused as a minor by a priest, deacon or church employee, or who has knowledge of any such offense against a minor or vulnerable adult to contact the appropriate civil authority or the diocesan victim assistance coordinator at **616-243-0491**. There is no timeframe for bringing forth such a complaint.
- After early 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created a document that would guide the efforts of the Church in the United States in creating safe environments. The Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People was promulgated in June 2002 and has since been revised three times.
- Today, the Catholic Church in the United States has the strongest measures in the world in place for protecting children and young people, including safe environment training for children and adults, background checks and a zero-tolerance policy.
- All members of our clergy, volunteers, staff members, and teachers must complete the following requirements to be around children:
 - attend the Virtus – Protecting God’s Children Program
 - agree to compliance with the Standards for Ministerial Behavior
 - undergo criminal history background checks
 - Certain staff members must also be fingerprinted
- Every seminarian, prior to admission, undergoes an extensive psychological evaluation and background check. There is also ongoing evaluation while in formation.
- Since 2002, the Diocese of Grand Rapids has held VIRTUS: Protecting God’s Children training sessions in which more than 23,000 clergy, teachers, staff, volunteers and others have been trained to identify and report abuse of minors. In this past fiscal year alone, 65 sessions were held.
- The Diocese of Grand Rapids takes every allegation of clergy sexual abuse seriously. Every allegation is immediately turned over to the appropriate county prosecutor and then to our diocesan review board.
- Our diocesan review board is made up of two clergy members and seven members of the laity, including a retired judge, a retired FBI agent, therapists, and an educator.
- The Diocese of Grand Rapids has participated in annual charter compliance audits since their inception and we have passed every year.
- The Diocese of Grand Rapids will temporarily remove from ministry any priest or deacon who is under investigation for a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult. The name of any man who is permanently removed from ministry is publicly released.
- Money given to our parishes or the Catholic Services Appeal does not fund settlements with survivors of clergy abuse. Money for our legal defense and counseling for survivors is paid through our insurance policy with the Michigan Catholic Conference.

