



# TO PROTECT AND HEAL

As priests, educators and staff members at the San Diego Catholic Diocese we have no higher responsibility than to protect the children and young people entrusted to our care. That's why, starting in 2002, the U.S. Catholic Church and the San Diego diocese adopted a series of reforms to prevent the abuse of children and young people. The reforms include:

**Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** Any priest of our diocese credibly accused of abusing a minor will be reported to law enforcement, his faculties will be removed and he will be banned from public ministry permanently. Similar zero tolerance policy applies to any teacher, staff member or volunteer. No one with a credible accusation of abusing a minor will be employed by the diocese.

**Background Checks:** All clergy, religious brothers and sisters, staff and volunteers who work with children at parishes and schools are subject to a criminal background check that is continuously updated against local, state and federal databases. Seminarians also receive additional screening prior to ordination.

**Safe Environment Training to Help Children Protect Themselves:** All children attending Catholic schools or taking religious education classes at parishes receive age-appropriate Safe Environment Training every year to give them the tools they need to protect themselves and to encourage them to report inappropriate behavior by their peers and adults. Around 50,000 children receive this training every year.

**Safe Environment Training for Staff to Prevent and Expose Abuse:** All employees of the diocese are required to go through Safe Environment Training and to renew their training every five years. Seminarians are required to comply with Safe Environment requirements. Part of their formation includes psychological tests reviewed by a board that includes lay experts.

**Annual Compliance Audit:** Every year, the diocese must submit a report to the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops on how it is complying with these procedures and every three years the diocese undergoes an on-site audit by an independent auditor. The diocese has been in compliance since its first audit in 2004 and passed its most recent on-site audit in 2018.

**Creation of an Independent Review Board:** All dioceses, including San Diego, established an Independent Review Board with a majority of laity to advise the bishop and help determine the credibility of any allegations received by the diocese. The board includes people with backgrounds in law enforcement, psychology, and criminal justice, as well as a victim-survivor of abuse. The board reviews cases involving both minors and vulnerable adults.

**National Hotline to Report Bishops who Fail to Report or Prevent Abuse:**  
The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is creating a third-party reporting system to receive confidentially, by phone or online, reports of bishops who had failed to take the necessary steps to detect and punish abusers in their administrative roles or had committed sexual abuse themselves.

**Independent Compensation Program:**  
Our diocese has worked with five other (arch)dioceses in California to create an Independent Victim Compensation Program to help compensate individuals abused as children by priests of our diocese for the pain they have endured and to help them to heal. There is no statute of limitations on when the abuse may have taken place. While any offer of compensation is binding on the diocese, any victim-survivor who makes a claim is free to reject it and seek other legal recourse.



## **Safeinourdiocese.org**

This website presents all the information about how the diocese addresses the issue of abuse at the diocese, which includes providing a list of all credibly accused priests. The site summarizes the Safe Environment Program, links to key resources, and details new initiatives the diocese is undertaking to expand support for victim-survivors and strengthen prevention efforts.

