"Our commitment to creating and maintaining safe environments is absolute and will not be compromised."

- Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr



OUR PROMISE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



Our commitment to creating and maintaining safe environments is absolute and will not be compromised.

Pope Saint Paul VI wrote, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41). Indeed, the witness of an authentically Christian life is a powerful testament to the truth and beauty of the Gospel. The light of Christ radiates forth from all who follow Him in faith, casting out the darkness of the sins and errors that hold us back from the joy and freedom that God has prepared for us.

At the same time, the failure to follow Christ by certain members of His Church offers a counter-witness to the Gospel, which causes grievous wounds to the Body of Christ. The grave sin of sexual abuse committed by priests, employees and volunteers within the Church has caused great harm to victims and become a source of deep shame for Catholics in recent years. In response to these serious failures, the Church has made important reforms. Here in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, effective systems have been put into place to support victims and protect children and all vulnerable adults in all of our archdiocesan institutions.

Since its promulgation in 1993, the Decree on Child Protection has directed the Archdiocese’s response to this issue. The purpose of the decree is twofold: to prevent the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and to provide a comprehensive system for promptly responding to incidents of abuse if they occur. The decree provides for:

- Fingerprinting and complete background checks on all clergy, employees, and volunteers;
- Ongoing required training for clergy, employees, and volunteers on recognizing the signs of abuse of children and vulnerable adults;
- Procedures for reporting suspected abuse;
- Immediate reporting of all allegations of abuse to the appropriate civil authorities;
- A Child Protection Review Board that is comprised primarily of lay people;

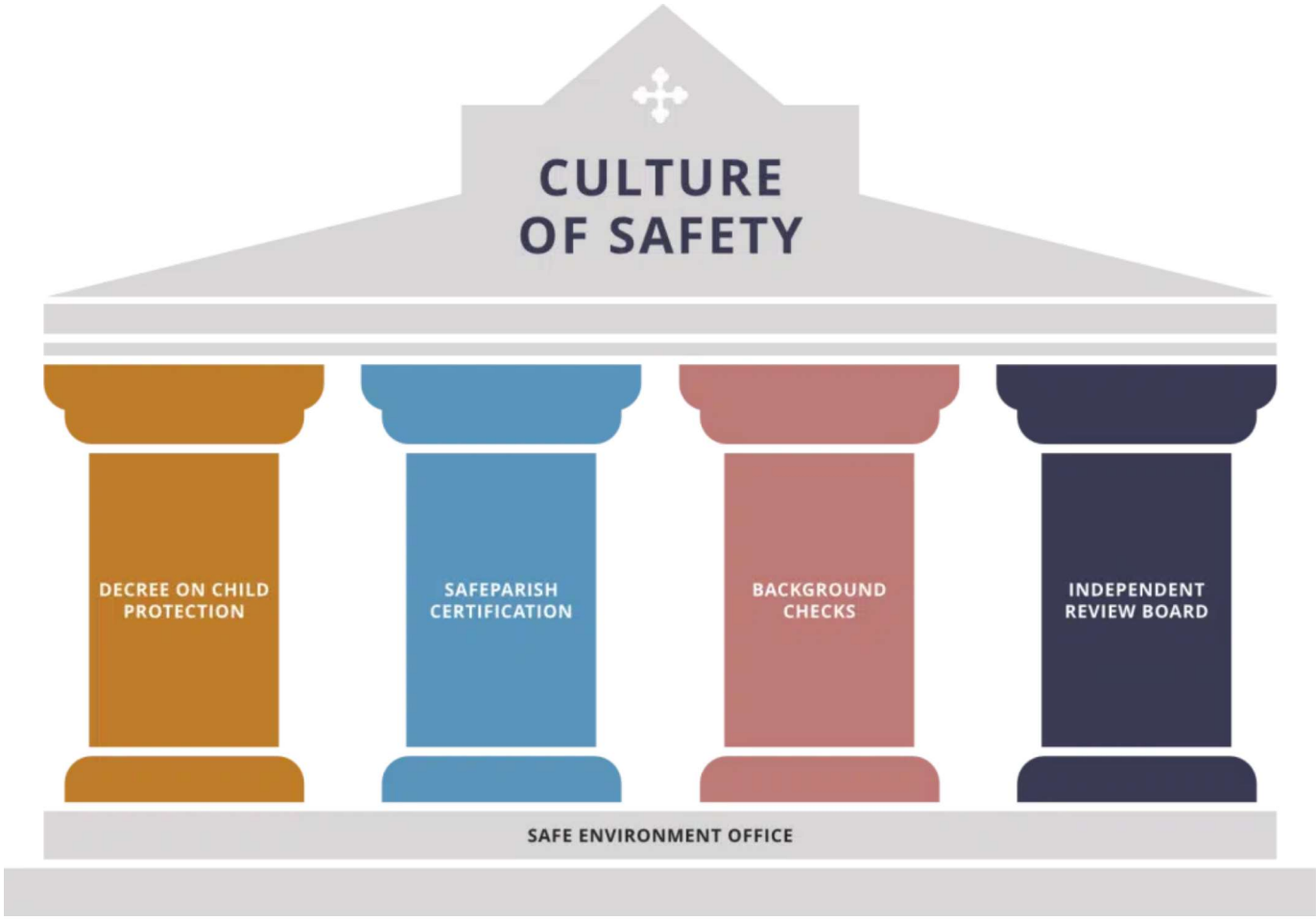
- Training of children in Catholic schools and religious education programs on warning signs and appropriate responses for their own protection; and
- Onsite independent audits of policies and procedures by an outside firm.

If you suspect abuse on the part of any agent of the Archdiocese, please report it to the appropriate law enforcement agency, as well as through our Report Misconduct link on this website. If you see something, please say something.

I am sorry for the terrible pain and suffering experienced by the victims of abuse throughout their lives. I am sorry for the trust that has been violated. I realize that no program or policy can undo the harm done to victims and their families. But I pray that these efforts can be a source of genuine healing and support for victims, as well as establish effective measures to prevent abuse of any kind going forward.

Please join me in praying for the healing of all victims of the grave sin of sexual abuse and for a greater fidelity to Christ among all the members of His Church. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, patroness of our nation, continue to intercede for us. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and protect us.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati



DECREE ON CHILD PROTECTION

First implemented in 1993, the Decree on Child Protection is the backbone of our diligent work to comprehensively reform how the Church handles sexual abuse allegations. It establishes norms for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati both to protect children and vulnerable adults and to provide a system for promptly responding to allegations of abuse.

SAFEPARISH CERTIFICATION

SafeParish provides training and certification in the protection of children against sexual abuse. SafeParish certification has been in use in the archdiocese since July 2021 (the archdiocese had previously used VIRTUS since 2012). Every priest, deacon, employee and volunteer in a position that involves possible contact with a youth or vulnerable adult is required to attend initial training and maintain quarterly compliance.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

The archdiocese utilizes an independent third party company to conduct background checks — which include the Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation databases — on all clergy, employees and volunteers. Fingerprints are completed on every employee through SELECTION.com. Quarterly electronic background checks are conducted on every individual.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW BOARD

The Review Board serves as a consulting body to the archbishop. The Board advises the archbishop in his assessment of allegations of child abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults by clergy, employees or volunteers. The Board comprises Catholics of outstanding integrity and good judgment who practice the faith in full communion with the Church. All credible allegations of abuse are brought to the attention of the Review Board.

To learn more about the Review Board or its members, please refer to the Decree on Child Protection.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

The Safe Environment Office assists the archbishop in protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse. For several decades, the archdiocese has been working to ensure the safety of children against abuse. The Safe Environment Office was established to strengthen those efforts and ensure that our commitment to the safety of children is absolute.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT RESOURCES

Since 2012:

0+
THOUSAND

CHILD PROTECTION TRAINED INDIVIDUALS

0+
THOUSAND

COMPLETED BACKGROUND CHECKS

0+

SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATORS

OUR PLEDGE TO HEAL

In an effort to provide genuine healing and support to victims, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Ministry to Survivors of Abuse coordinator has been serving people in our community for more than a decade. This coordinator helps people with healing and reconciliation after an appalling violation of their human dignity. Every person who makes a substantiated allegation of abuse is offered compassionate care through the pastoral and spiritual support of the Church, as well as counseling assistance with the counselor of their choosing for as long as it is helpful.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are some of the steps the Archdiocese of Cincinnati has undertaken to prevent sexual abuse of a minor in the Church?

What happens when the Archdiocese of Cincinnati receives a report of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest, lay employee or volunteer?

When did the Archdiocese of Cincinnati begin publishing a list of clerics with substantiated allegations of child abuse?

Has the Archdiocese of Cincinnati ever opened its files for examination by civil law enforcement?

Does the archdiocese notify law enforcement whenever it becomes aware of allegations of sexual abuse of a minor, even when the misconduct took place many years ago?

What is the process for reporting sexual abuse of a minor by Church personnel?

What resources and assistance does the Church offer to victims of sexual abuse by priests?

What does the Archdiocese of Cincinnati do to establish the suitability of a priest assigned for ministry in the archdiocese?

What can the faithful do to support victims of abuse and ensure a safe environment in the Church?

Who are the contacts at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati pertaining to creating a safe environment?

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