

Archdiocese of Philadelphia



ENHANCED EFFORTS TO ASSIST VICTIMS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE



*“You and I, my brother priests, gather here this afternoon,
in the presence of our wounded children.
Today, we listen to their adult voices,
Witness the pain they have endured alone in secret,
And appreciate their courage.
We acknowledge the failings of the past but,
With the grace of God, we will not fail in the future.”*

CARDINAL JUSTIN RIGALI
*Archbishop of Philadelphia
from Witness to the Sorrow*

SEPTEMBER 21, 2007



Dear Friends,

Two years ago the findings of the Philadelphia Grand Jury on sexual abuse of children by clergy left bitterness, anger and much sadness in their wake. Since that time the local Church has been committed to listening and learning about the needs of victims of clergy sexual assault. Much has changed.

One lesson that I have learned is that many victims are reluctant to turn to the Church for assistance. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has diligently worked to restructure and refocus efforts of victim assistance. We have attempted to reach out to victims in many ways including my radio messages and advertisements in newspapers.

Although some people may feel that it is not necessary to address this issue, the Archdiocese must continue to speak publicly in order to reach victims who need assistance and to convey the changes we have enacted. The changes reflect the recognition that victims are not at fault and that we are committed to assisting them in any way for as long as they have need. Some people fear that clergy sexual abuse exists in the Church now as it did many years ago. With confidence I report that currently there are no archdiocesan priests or deacons in ministry who are known to have sexually abused a minor.

In order to share the good works that have been accomplished within the Archdiocese, I present this brochure, "Enhanced Efforts to Assist Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse." It will bring to your attention the many positive steps the Archdiocese has undertaken in this area. I will continue to meet with victims and to devote every possible effort to assist them on their journey toward healing. Integrity of life is their right and helping them pursue it is my pledge.

It is my hope that after you read this brochure, you will share it with a friend. It is my further hope that all will recognize what the Church has done and continues to do toward reconciliation and healing in Jesus' name.

Sincerely,

*Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia*



In January 2006 Cardinal Justin Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia, hired Mary Achilles as part of his continuing efforts to strengthen services to victims of sexual abuse by clergy. For the previous ten years Ms. Achilles served as the first-ever Victim Advocate for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Ms. Achilles brings a long history of service to crime victims including ten years as the

Director of Victim Services for the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office.

As Victim Advocate for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Ms. Achilles makes recommendations regarding changes and programming to Cardinal Rigali.

Direct Services to Victims of Clergy Sexual Assault

Report Intake – In 2002 the Archdiocese of Philadelphia changed the process for how someone reports allegations of sexual assault. The Office of the Vicar for Clergy no longer takes reports. Reports from victims and/or others are now taken by trained victim assistance staff eliminating the need for victims to make a report directly to a member of the clergy.

Meetings with Cardinal Rigali – Since his arrival in October 2003 Cardinal Rigali has met with victims of clergy sexual abuse at their request. These meetings are held at a location comfortable to all involved. The agenda for the meetings is developed by the victim depending upon his or her individual needs. The victims are given a forum to speak to the Cardinal about their personal experience or any topic related to the issue of clergy sexual assault. Cardinal Rigali has never refused a private meeting with any victim.

Simplification of access to financial support for counseling expenses – In March 2006 the Archdiocese instituted a process of quick access to financial support for counseling expenses including transportation expenses and child care in an effort to break down any barriers related to obtaining the professional assistance that victims may need. The victim assistance coordinator can *immediately authorize* one year of counseling payments with no requirements for any documentation etc. This quick access is to ensure that victims can see a licensed counselor of their choice as many times a week as necessary for a period of twelve months. After one year the counselor will be asked to certify by use of a simple form that the therapy being provided is related to the sexual assault. Victims are not required to utilize private insurance. This change eliminates the previous requirement of requesting progress reports from the therapist to justify payment.

Reimbursement for back payments of counseling expenses – The Archdiocese provides reimbursement of back payments for counseling expenses. The Archdiocese reimburses victims for payment of counseling expenses paid privately by the victim. The victim and/or their therapist will be asked to provide some type of record indicating the service was provided.

Financial support to rebuild lives – The Victim Assistance Coordinators work with individuals to assist them with their particular needs to reconstruct their lives in the aftermath of sexual assault. Some of the more salient forms of financial support have consisted of inpatient drug and alcohol treatment, a therapist for a mothers' support group, tuition assistance for children currently in Catholic schools, payment of funeral expenses, emergency medical treatment, medicine related to mental health treatment, second opinions, health and welfare expenses such as therapy and exercise expenses etc., and emergency expenses such as food and housing and similar expenses related to the individual rebuilding their lives.

Organizational Changes

Establishment of the Office of Child and Youth Protection – In June 2006 the Archdiocese established the Office of Child and Youth Protection to coordinate under one office both victim assistance and prevention efforts. This reorganization provides an office whose primary focus is making victim assistance services comprehensive, accessible, user-friendly and creates one point of contact for victims.

Bishops' Training – In July 2006 all of the Auxiliary Bishops of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia attended a private training on the impact of clergy sexual assault on victims. The training was conducted by Fr. Gerard McGlone, S.J., a nationally recognized expert in working with both victims of clergy sexual assault and offending clergy.

Witness to the Sorrow – In September 2006 Cardinal Rigali called all diocesan priests to Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary to witness the experiences of three victims of clergy sexual assault. This event was broadcast live on the Archdiocesan web site so that victims anywhere could participate in the event. A video of the event is currently on the Archdiocesan web site www.archdiocese-phl.org (under Catholic News)

Seminary Training – In March 2007 all Seminarians were trained on working with victims of violence. This training included a segment on the crisis and trauma of victimization presented by Mary Achilles; the dynamics of domestic violence presented by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence; the trauma of homicide survivors presented by the Deputy Director of the Office for Victim Services of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and an overview of the Church's response to clergy sexual assault presented by Karen Becker, Director, Archdiocese of Philadelphia Office of Child and Youth Protection.

Victim Outreach

Public Outreach Campaign – In an effort to reach out to victims, Cardinal Rigali has developed and aired radio ads in which he speaks directly to victims of clergy sexual abuse. He has also developed a series of print ads that have run concurrently with the radio ads every quarter since September 2006. Both the radio and print ads have run on a variety of local stations and newspapers (*KYW News Radio, WPHT, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Daily News as well as regional papers*) including Spanish language media.

Parish Announcements – When a priest or deacon is removed from ministry pending an investigation of an allegation of sexual abuse or when the investigation of an allegation results in the finding of a substantiated allegation parishioners are provided with the information through announcements at parishes. News releases regarding these actions are widely distributed and posted on the Archdiocesan web site.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia recognizes that this announcement may be painful to anyone who has experienced sexual abuse in their life. If someone needs assistance or wishes to talk please contact the Victim Assistance Program for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at **1-888-800-8780**.

Clergy Status Section of Archdiocesan Web Site – This site provides a detailed list of all Archdiocesan priests and deacons against whom allegations of sexual abuse have been substantiated through a canonical process, have chosen a life of prayer and penance in lieu of the canonical process or have voluntarily sought laicization.

http://www.archdiocese-phl.org/protection/Updates/update_main.htm

Letters to Alumni – In specific situations the Office of Child and Youth Protection has, in conjunction with the Office of Catholic Education, sent letters to alumni of several schools informing them of allegations of sexual abuse at the school and offering support and assistance to those who might not have yet come forward for assistance.

For additional information please contact:

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