

# **REVIEW BOARD OFFICIAL POLICY**

## **Mission Statement and Procedures**

**September, 2011**

The review board for the Archdiocese of Omaha was established in January 2003, in response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approval of two documents, the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (June 2002, revised in 2005), and the Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons (December 2002, revised in 2006). The Charter and the Essential Norms address the crisis in the Church in the United States regarding the sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and Church personnel.

This Mission Statement and Procedures directs the work of the board, the areas of responsibility, membership, and procedures of the review board. This document is part of the Archdiocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People.

### **Mission of the Review Board**

It is the mission of the review board to serve the People of God in the Archdiocese of Omaha by assisting the archbishop in his responsibilities for the protection of children and young people. The board is charged with advising the archbishop in the work of the just handling of allegations of sexual abuse, the prevention of further abuse, the healing of those who have been injured, and the recreation of a sense of trust among the faithful and larger community.

### **General Responsibilities of the Review Board**

The review board is responsible to the archbishop providing consultation to him in his service to those who have been injured by sexual abuse, the alleged offenders, and the people of the archdiocese. The general responsibilities of the board are to:

1. provide consultation to the archbishop in his assessment of the validity of allegations of sexual abuse of minors;
2. review the implementation and application of the Archdiocesan Policy for the Protection of Minors to assure compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Essential Norms;
3. assist the archbishop and chancellor in the oversight of the victim outreach and prevention manager position;
4. provide consultation to the archbishop regarding an offender's suitability for ministry;
5. review with the archbishop all programs, policies and procedures that relate to the Charter within the archdiocese;
6. offer advice on all aspects of cases of sexual abuse of minors, whether retrospectively or prospectively;

## **Membership**

The review board shall consist of no less than five, no more than 12 members of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church appointed by the archbishop. The majority should be lay persons, none of whom are in the employ of the archdiocese. Members serve without compensation, except for reimbursement for expenses. At least one member shall be a priest who is an experienced and respected pastor. Members are appointed for a term of five years, which can be renewed.

The Promoter of Justice shall participate in meetings of the review board when appropriate in considering cases, to assist and advise the board. The Promoter of Justice is not a voting member of the review board.

## **Conduct of Business**

*Officers.* The board shall elect from its membership a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and a secretary who shall serve one year terms.

- a. Officers may serve more than one term.
- b. The chairperson shall preside at the meetings of the board. The vice-chairperson shall preside in the absence of the chairperson.
- c. The secretary shall be responsible for the written recording of the discussion and the actions of the board and prepare, in consultation with the chairperson, the agenda for the meetings.

*Quorum.* A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum for doing business. For advice on suitability for ministry, allegations of abuse, policy review and/or change, advice on all aspects of cases, and dismissal of a board member, a concurrence of not less than a majority of the board (not just those present) shall be necessary to make a recommendation or take an action. For all other business, a majority of those present shall prevail.

*Procedures.* The board may adopt procedures to govern details of its activities, such as the frequency of meetings and confidential maintenance of records and any other business it may conduct.

*The review board* may designate subcommittees to address specific areas of work.

*Confidentiality.* All deliberations of the review board shall remain confidential in order to respect the dignity of the involved persons. If it has been determined by the board that a member has breached confidentiality, it constitutes immediate recourse to dismissal of the member by majority vote of the board. Official disclosure of the summaries of board action shall be made periodically through formal announcements prepared by the board.

## **Board Duties**

- Review of allegations. The review board shall receive a comprehensive report from the archdiocesan investigator and the Victim Outreach and Prevention manager of all allegations of abuse of minors by priests or deacons. Victim and family inquiries to the board or board member will be directed to the victim outreach and prevention manager / chancellor for pastoral outreach.
- Consultation on allegations. The board shall provide consultation to the archbishop regarding validity of allegations and suitability for ministry.
- Policy compliance. For all allegations, the board shall determine whether the archdiocesan policy on sexual abuse was followed regarding the reporting to civil authorities, the outreach to the victims, the outreach to parish communities, and the appropriate action, in accord with Canon Law and prudent judgment, toward clergy alleged to have caused the abuse.
- Policy Review. The board shall periodically review the archdiocesan policy on sexual abuse. A report of the recommendations for any changes in the policy shall be sent to the archbishop.
- Communication to the people of the archdiocese. The board shall communicate regularly with the people of the archdiocese, reporting on all matters that are not confidential.