



PROMISE TO PROTECT

Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

Promise to Protect Webpage: Frequently Asked Questions

The Archdiocese of St. Louis has a comprehensive Promise to Protect initiative in place. What follows are excerpts from the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Promise to Protect webpage. For additional links and details, please visit <https://www.archstl.org/promise-to-protect/frequently-asked-questions>

How has the Church responded to the sexual abuse crisis?

Following the 2002 recognition of child sexual abuse in the Church, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops developed the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The Charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011 and 2018.

What is the Office of Child and Youth Protection?

Per the Charter, the Office of Child and Youth Protection serves persons who bring forward allegations of sexual abuse of minors by a member of the clergy or by lay employees and volunteers of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. In addition, the Office of Child and Youth Protection oversees and ensures compliance with policies and procedures created to prevent child sexual abuse, as well as receives and investigates reports of abuse.

How do I report abuse?

To report current sexual abuse of a minor by a member of clergy, your first call is to the Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (800.392.3738). After you have reported to the authorities, please call the Office of Child and Youth Protection (314.792.7704). To report past child sexual abuse of a current adult, please call the Office of Child and Youth Protection (314.792.7704).

What steps are in place to prevent abuse?

The archdiocese's Safe Environment Program, managed by the Office of Child and Youth Protection, requires all adult employees and volunteers who work with or near minors and/or vulnerable adults to comply with the following policy requirements:

- Attend a Protecting God's Children workshop and complete online updates.
- Read and sign the archdiocese's Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Complete a national criminal record check and agree to regular updates.

In addition, the Safe Touch program is taught annually to students grades K-9 in archdiocesan schools and parish school of religion programs so that they are prepared to protect themselves from potential abuse.

Who is on the Archdiocesan Review Board?

The Board's membership is composed primarily of laypersons who are not employed by the Archdiocese of St. Louis and who represent a variety of disciplines and occupations pertinent to issues surrounding the sexual abuse of minors, including mental health, medicine, education and law enforcement. The Board chair is held by a layperson who is not an employee of the archdiocese.

Why are the identities of the Review Board members confidential?

Out of concern for privacy, the archdiocese does not disclose the identities of the Review Board members. Review Board members serve five-year terms.

What is the protocol for seminary formation?

Prior to admittance into Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, the seminarian undergoes a psychological evaluation, which includes an assessment of his mental and psychological health. The Seminary has two full-time lay psychologists to assist in human development, and each seminarian meets regularly with an in-house spiritual director and formation advisor. Additionally, the faculty, administration, formation advisors and psychologists meet several times a year to discuss the progress of each seminarian in every dimension of his formation so that potential challenges can be identified and addressed. Additionally, if seminarians see or experience something that does not foster a healthy learning environment, they may report their concerns to any of these advisors with the confidence that appropriate action will be taken.

Who is involved in mandated reporting?

The Archdiocese of St. Louis believes that all adults have a moral obligation to report suspected abuse, regardless of mandated reporting laws.

Per the Mandated Reporter Statute (Section 210.115, RSMo.), certain people are required to immediately report to the Missouri Division of Social Services Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-392-3738) when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or when they observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which may result in abuse or neglect. These mandated reporters include:

- Physicians, medical residents/interns, nurses, other health care practitioners
- Psychologists and mental health professionals
- Social workers
- Daycare center or other child-care workers
- Teachers, principals, or other school officials
- Clergymen or priests (except for information learned in the Sacrament of Confession— please speak to your pastor for more guidance)
- Peace officers or law enforcement officials
- Other persons with the responsibility for the care of children
- Any other person may report suspected abuse if such person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect

Please note that reporters are protected from any adverse actions or sanctions for making such report, and multiple mandated reporters with knowledge of abuse or neglect may call together to make a single report.