

RESPONSE TEAM

In the Diocese of Cleveland, a response team was set up to handle all aspects involved in dealing with anyone who has been affected personally by the sex abuse crisis. The team works together to make sure all who are in need of assistance are cared for both individually and on a parish or educational level. The team is divided into the following areas:

RESPONSE LINE AND INTAKE REPORTS

There are two Certified Social Workers, who receive the calls from victims, listen to the information they wish to share, take the official intake report and tell them that they will be hearing from the Victim Assistance Coordinator who will respond to their needs and give them whatever assistance is needed for their healing. They forward the information to the VAC and call to let her know of the recent communication they have had with a victim.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR

The VAC, is Sr. Laura Bouhall OSU. She is the Assistant Chancellor and has the responsibility of assisting any person who is in a conflict situation with the diocese. You can reach her at 216-696-6525 ext. 2060 or lbouhall@dioceseofcleveland.org. Upon receiving information from the Response Team, or in some cases the Review Board, the Victim Assistance Coordinator calls the person involved and offers her support. If a victim has hired an attorney and did not contact the diocesan response line prior to making an allegation the diocese will not contact the victim. The VAC's role is to review the intake report from the Response Team, contact the person involved offer him/her the opportunity to meet with her and the Bishop if the person wishes to do so and provide a compassionate and caring response to his/her needs. Following a telephone conversation and/or a meeting she contacts the legal department of the diocese to assist with counseling for the victim, notify Children and Family Services and the local police department where the incident occurred. The ongoing role of the VAC is to maintain contact with victims according to their needs and provide assistance and resources for their continued healing.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator works with the Review Board providing them with information they need in order to complete their work in assessing each allegation and making a recommendation to the Bishop. She is responsible for managing and coordinating the files making sure the information is accurate and up to date. All of these files are kept in a confidential area of the diocese.

PARISH VISITATION TEAM

The Parish Visitation Team meets with the parish staff to be of support to them, to help them in processing the experience, to look at the responsibilities in the parish and make a plan so that those are covered, to offer immediate assistance, i.e. communication with the people of the parish (letter from the Bishop and announcement to the people), to make arrangements for counselors to be available to the staff and to the people of the parish, to provide resource materials which might be helpful to the staff and parish community and to set a date for a parish

gathering.

A meeting is held as soon as possible with the parish community at which the community is invited to pray together, is given all information available, and at which the people of the parish have the opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Counselors and resource materials are made available to the people of the parish.

This team has also taken responsibility for meeting regularly with the administrators of these parishes for the purpose of ongoing support for them, for the staffs and for the people of the parish.

VIRTUS COORDINATOR

The Virtus Coordinator is Donna Albertone she can be reached at 216-696-6525 ext.1157 or at dmalbertone@yahoo.com. Donna is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the VIRTUS, Protecting God's Children program, a child sexual abuse awareness and education prevention effort.

VIRTUS is directed toward all religious, employees, and volunteers throughout the eight county Diocese of Cleveland and the program is available for all parents and all children, whether in our day schools or parish schools of religion.

The VIRTUS Coordinator maintains all records regarding the safe environment program as outlined by the US Catholic Bishops and is responsible for auditing parishes and organizations for compliance.