

DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND

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

The Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) receives the calls from victims, listens to the information provided and prepares the official intake report. The Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) and the Legal Office of the diocese coordinate informing the appropriate civil authorities. The VAC is the primary person handling the intakes and is supported by Catholic Charities licensed professionals. The VAC responds to the victim and their family, within 24 hours, and provides whatever assistance may be required to facilitate the process of healing. A confidential telephone line (216) 334-2999 and confidential email response_services@dioceseofcleveland.org is available to assist individuals with their concerns.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR (VAC)

The VAC is Terence J. Flanagan LISW-S. He is the Executive Director of Catholic Charities Parish Outreach. Effective July 1, 2019 Kathleen McComb will be the new

Victim Assistance Coordinator. The VAC has the responsibility of assisting any person who has been the victim of sexual abuse as a minor or who has knowledge or suspicions of sexual abuse of a minor committed by church personnel. You can reach the VAC at (216) 334-2999. This is a confidential telephone line and voicemail supported only by the VAC. Upon receiving information from the Response Line, Confidential Response Services Email or in some cases the Review Board, the Victim Assistance Coordinator calls the person involved and offers support. If a victim has hired an attorney and did not contact the diocesan response line prior to making an allegation the VAC will not contact the victim unless requested. The VAC will also offer him/her the opportunity to meet with the Bishop or his delegate and to provide a compassionate and caring response to his/her needs. Following a telephone conversation and/or a meeting with the victim, the VAC's role is to prepare the intake report and share the information with Legal Office, The Secretary and Vicar for Clergy and Religious for any action and/or follow up that may be required and the Review Board when protocol requires and copy the Vicar General / Moderator of the Curia. The Legal Department is responsible to notify, in writing, Children and Family Services and/or the local police department or county prosecutor where the incident occurred. Additionally the VAC contacts the Legal Department of the Diocese to request authorization for counseling if requested by the victim or their family. 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. The VAC 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.

Sister Rita Mary Harwood, S.N.D., the Secretary for Parish Life and Development and Fr. Donald Oleksiak, Director of Clergy Personnel and Moderator of the Curia work together with the members of the Parish Staff to provide support and assistance to the parish community.

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 Sharon Minson she can be reached at 216-696-6525 ext.1157 or at sminson@dioceseofcleveland.org. Sharon 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 clerics, 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.