

DIOCESE OF MADISON  
**Communication Policy**  
for the sexual abuse issue



USCCB, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Article 7:

Each diocese/eparchy will develop a communications policy that reflects a commitment to transparency and openness. Within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved, dioceses/eparchies will deal as openly as possible with members of the community. This is especially so with regard to assisting and supporting parish communities directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving minors.

***Principles of Transparency and Openness***

Within the context of "transparency and openness," the Diocese of Madison is committed to communications that lead to cooperation and build open relationships. Foundational to this commitment is the publication and promulgation of the [\*Diocese of Madison Policy Regarding the Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Harassment\*](#), outlining the written policy, the procedures, and the processes and providing copies of the forms for reporting. The diocesan policy is available online at the diocesan website ([www.madisondiocese.org](http://www.madisondiocese.org)).

In keeping with this commitment to "transparency and openness," the Diocese of Madison will communicate appropriately with the individuals involved, with the faithful of the Diocese and specifically with the members of an affected faith community, with the general public, and with the members of the media while observing the canonical responsibilities to protect the good reputation, rights and privacy of all persons involved and the common good of the Church (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 220, 223, 1717.2).

The Diocese of Madison will not enter into confidentiality agreements except in those cases authorized by the ordinary in response to a request from a victim/survivor for such consideration for grave and substantial reasons. Any such confidentiality agreement must be noted in the text of the agreement (*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Article 3).

In the event of an allegation involving the sexual abuse of a child by a member of clergy, staff person or volunteer of the diocese or of its parishes, schools, offices, institutions, or programs, the Vicar General or other designee of the Bishop will oversee communication with the diocesan entity (parish, school or program) affected. The Director of the Office of Communications is designated as the sole spokesperson and will provide information in a pastoral and timely manner to the general public and will coordinate all media contact. All media inquiries made to parishes, schools, offices, institutions, or programs within the Diocese should be referred to the Director of the Office of Communications.

### ***Reporting to Civil Authorities***

The Diocese of Madison will comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to the appropriate District Attorney or governmental agency and will cooperate in their investigation in accord with applicable law. The Diocese will cooperate with public authorities about reporting in cases where the person is no longer 18 years of age or under. In every instance, the Diocese will advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

### ***Supporting Communities Affected by Ministerial Misconduct Involving Minors***

The Diocese is committed to providing pastoral support to the faith communities, their members and pastoral staffs when affected by allegations of ministerial misconduct involving minors by a member of clergy, an employee or volunteer of the faith community. The Bishop, working in conjunction with the pastor, institution supervisor, office or program director, and/or Dean will determine the specific pastoral outreach for the particular situation. The Bishop may choose to consult the Sexual Abuse Review Board, the Victim Assistance Coordinator, or others, as deemed appropriate.

### ***Communication within an Investigative or Penal Process***

In order to protect the rights, reputation, and integrity of all individuals involved and to ensure the veracity of the investigation by both the Diocese and the civil authorities, the investigation of any allegation of child sexual abuse will be handled as confidentially as the circumstances allow. Only the following will have access to the information concerning an allegation: the Bishop, the Vicar General, the Chancellor, the Victims Assistance Coordinator, the Diocesan Sexual Abuse Review Board, and tribunal officials. In the event that the allegation concerns a member of an institute of consecrated life, a society of apostolic life, or personal prelature, the appropriate superior would be notified.

The Diocese will withhold public announcements concerning allegations received, investigations in progress, canonical trials or administrative processes until completion of the process. If an allegation becomes public knowledge, the Diocese, through the Director of the Office of Communication, will make no public comments other than to confirm that an allegation has been received, that a report has been filed with the proper civil authority, and that the allegation is under investigation following the procedures called for by Church and civil law.

The Diocese will provide timely information relevant to the process and to actions taken by the Diocese to individuals involved, those lodging the allegation, those implicated by the allegations, and the faith communities affected.

At the conclusion of the process, the Director of the Office of Communications will coordinate the announcement of the outcome including any restrictions to be placed upon the ministry/service of the accused or any steps to be taken to restore the accused to ministry/service.

### ***Public Awareness of Sexual Abuse of Children Issues***

The Diocese will work through its parishes, schools, offices, institutions, and programs to heighten its members' awareness of the existence of sexual abuse of children and to train these same members in the measures necessary for the establishment of a safe environment for all.