



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

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Frequently Asked Questions Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report – Diocese of Harrisburg

1. The Grand Jury report was extensive. Can you break down the Harrisburg section?

The Grand Jury report named 38 accused Diocesan priests. Of those, 30 are deceased. Seventeen were already deceased when the accusation against them was made. Of the eight still living, all have been removed from ministry.

2. What services does the Diocese provide to survivors of abuse?

The Diocese's foremost concern is for healing for survivors. The Diocese offers spiritual, pastoral, and mental health assistance to all survivors of abuse. The Diocese provides the financial means for survivors to receive the counseling services they need. Also, early in 2019, survivors will be able to participate in our Survivors' Compensation Program, which will provide additional financial support.

3. What is the Survivors' Compensation Program?

This program, which is independent of the Diocese, will expedite the claims process so that survivors can receive compensation much faster than going through the court system. Our expectation is that survivors will complete a claims form and, after review by the Administrator (Attorney Kenneth Feinberg), the Diocese will be informed how much compensation each survivor is to receive.

4. How do I know the money I put into the collection basket is going where I intend?

Parish collections are used to finance parish operations and expenses, including maintenance of parish property, utility expenses, parish staff salaries, parish ministries, religious education expenses, and educational supplies and expenses. If a parish has a budget shortfall, the Diocese will loan that parish money to cover the shortfall. If a parish has a surplus, these funds can be deposited into the parish's savings account with the Diocese, or used as a cash balance to start the next fiscal year.

5. Where is the money coming from for the Survivors' Compensation Program?

The funding for this program will come from the Diocese's available assets, including investments, earnings from investments and recovery from insurance. In addition, the Diocese will also borrow money and, if needed, will sell Diocesan assets to fund this program.

6. What does the Diocese currently do when it receives a report of abuse?

The Diocese reports every accusation to ChildLine and to the appropriate District Attorney Office. If law enforcement does not conduct an investigation or indicates to the Diocese that it can conduct its own independent investigation, then the Diocese employs former law enforcement agents to review any such report of abuse. Upon the recommendation from these law enforcement agents, appropriate actions are taken by the Diocese.

7. Are there any priests still in ministry against whom there is a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor?

No. Any priest with a credible allegation of abuse is permanently removed from ministry. He may not work or volunteer for the Diocese or its parishes, schools, or other programs. He may not celebrate Mass publicly, administer the sacraments, wear clerical garb, or present himself publicly as a priest. Any priest with a credible allegation is also responsible for his own legal expenses.

8. Why haven't priests been criminally charged for sexual abuse of minors?

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, most of the accused priests are deceased or the laws of our Commonwealth prevent these charges. We do support legislation that would remove the statute of limitations on criminal charges for those who abuse children.

9. What is the Diocese Youth Protection Program?

This program is a comprehensive policy detailing the Diocese's youth protection program. It explains how abuse reports should be made; who needs clearances and which types of clearances; prevention programs in place; outreach to survivors; how reports of abuse will be handled; and the roles of various Diocesan offices in the implementation of the program. The full policy can be found on our website, www.YouthProtectionHBG.com.

10. What screening is in place for priests that have already been ordained?

Each member of the clergy, as well as all the Diocese's staff, volunteers and vendors, must fulfill all state requirements for background checks and training programs. All clergy must obtain PA State Police, PA Child Abuse History and an FBI fingerprint check every five years. Clergy from outside the Diocese have to provide current clearances or obtain these clearances before they can begin their service here. Also, clergy from outside the United States, in addition to the clearances previously mentioned, also have to have an Interpol clearance check.

11. What is the screening process for seminarians?

The application process includes a written statement of the candidate's discernment history; an autobiography; a review of the candidate's work, school, and financial history and understanding of the pillars of the Catholic Faith; completed State Police and FBI background checks and state-certified safe-environment training; four to six letters of recommendation; an in-depth physical examination; and a full psychological evaluation, completed over a two-day period.

12. What is the training process for seminarians today?

After acceptance into the seminary, which is in itself an intensive process, each candidate will spend the next 6 to 9 years preparing for the priesthood. Each candidate has a formation advisor he meets with regularly to ensure he meets the many goals required of him, including his healthy psychological maturing. Each man undergoes a full psychological evaluation a second time, half way through his time in formation, in order to help explore where he has grown and areas where he still needs help. Seminarians also participate in 6-8 summer/yearly pastoral experiences. With each experience, we require five or six members of the parish to complete an evaluation for these men. At the end of every year, the seminary's formation team meets to examine each candidate carefully, to determine whether to vote him through to the next year or to ordination. Each seminarian knows that the Diocese can dismiss him for various reasons, but most especially in breaching the code of conduct expected of him. The bar is not set at "do not sin," but at "be beyond reproach."

13. Does the Diocese of Harrisburg engage in confidentiality agreements with survivors?

No. The Diocese of Harrisburg has not engaged in confidentiality agreements since 2002. Bishop Gainer, in an effort to bring healing and transparency, has waived the confidentiality agreements of any settlements previous to 2002.

14. What is the Diocese's stance on Pennsylvania's Statute of Limitations?

The Diocese has previously said that we do support a reform in the State's Statue of Limitation laws going forward, which would allow survivors a longer time to make reports and receive compensation, so long as any changes are not in violation of the Commonwealth's Constitution.

15. What should I do if I have suffered abuse?

Please report your abuse by calling Child Line at 1-800-932-0313. And also report the abuse to the Diocese by calling 1-800-626-1608 or ReportAbuse@hbgiocese.org. It is important to report abuse to both law enforcement and the Diocese so we may take immediate action regarding the accused.