

USCCB Charter shows increased spending on sex abuse prevention in 2008

Washington - Dioceses spent more than \$23 million nationwide in 2008 to prevent child sexual abuse, an increase of two million dollars from 2007. The figures are part of the 2008 Annual Report on the Implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/annual_report2008.shtml).

This sixth annual report also found that virtually all U.S. dioceses and eparchies are compliant with the 17-point *Charter*, which was adopted by the U.S. bishops in 2002. Most recent reports of abuse concerned alleged offenses from 1965-74, 35 to 40 years ago, and most alleged offenders are dead or out of the ministry.

The report is produced under the direction of the National Review Board, chaired by Judge Michael Merz. It includes the audit results of 188 of the 195 dioceses and eparchies in the United States as well as data collected for calendar year 2008 by the Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) in its *Annual Survey of Allegations and Costs*.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said that the bishops hope that with child abuse protection activities, "new ways are being found to improve not only the safety of children in the care of the Church, but also the safety of all children in society.

"By our prayers, actions, and dedication to protect children, we are working to make the world safer for all young people. We and the Church are on the right path." More than 99 percent of people who were required to participate in safe environment training programs did so. The report noted that meeting the requirements of Article 12 of the *Charter*, which governs safe environment training, has many challenges "ranging from data management to training the trainers." Nevertheless, 5,513,259 or 96.6 percent of the children received

safe environment training by June 30, 2008, and 1,446,156, or 98.8 percent of volunteers underwent background checks.

Last year, dioceses received ten new credible allegations of abuse to persons still under 18 years of age. CARA reported that in 2008, more old cases came to light as 620 victims made 625 allegations against 423 offenders. Most incidents took place decades ago, most frequently in the 1970-74 period. Most victims were male and a little more than half were between the ages of 10 and 14 when the abuse began. About 23 percent were younger than age 10. About 83 percent of the offenders among diocesan clergy are deceased, already removed from ministry, already laicized or missing. About 60 percent of those identified offenders in new allegations in 2008 had been identified in previous allegations.

A total of 16 priests or deacons were returned to ministry in 2008 based on resolution of allegations made during or prior to 2008. Money expended in relation to the abuse crisis decreased, though it is still substantial.

"The total allegation-related expenditures by dioceses, eparchies, and clerical and mixed religious institutes decreased by 29 percent between 2007 and 2008 after increasing in each of the previous three years," CARA reported. Dioceses, eparchies and religious institutes paid a total of \$374,408,554 in settlements. Two dioceses and five eparchies refused to participate in the audit process. They include the Diocese of Baker, Oregon; Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska; Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle-Chaldean, in Southfield, Michigan; Eparchy of St. Peter the Apostle-Chaldean in El Cajon, California; Eparchy of Newton for Melkites, in Roslindale, Massachusetts; Eparchy of St. Josephat for Ukrainians in Parma, Ohio; and Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance-Syrians in Union City, New Jersey.

All dioceses and eparchies, except

Lincoln, participated in the CARA Survey, a 99 percent response rate. Among clerical and mixed religious institutes, 160 out of a possible 219 participated for a 73 percent response rate. The overall response rate for dioceses and religious institutes was 86 percent, the highest response rate ever reached for this survey.

Audits were conducted by The Gavin Group, Inc., a Boston-based firm founded by former FBI agent William Gavin and overseen by the USCCB Secretariat for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Secretariat was created in 2002 by the bishops to address the clergy sexual abuse crisis.

Only four dioceses were found non-compliant with one or more of the *Charter* articles at the time of the audit. The Diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma, fell short of Article 12, which stipulates conditions for safe environment programs. The dioceses of Lansing, Michigan; Las Cruces, New Mexico; and Archdiocese of San Francisco, also were non-compliant at the time of their audits, but became compliant before the report was completed.

The National Review Board made four recommendations:

1. Expand audits to include parishes.
2. Continue, through the annual audit, to examine policies and practices of dioceses/eparchies related to background evaluations and safe environment training of international priests.
3. Make contact information for victim assistance coordinators readily available and easily obtainable by the public.
4. Ensure that persons responsible for *Charter* implementation in the diocese/eparchy possess the necessary skills and receive the resources and cooperation of all diocesan/eparchial personnel. Judge Michael Merz noted an increase in the number of dioceses that extended audits to selected parishes and said this "can provide bishops with important management information on the implementation of the *Charter*."



If you or someone you know has been sexually exploited by a member of the clergy and you need to talk with someone about abuse, exploitation, or harassment, please contact the Diocese of New Ulm Victim Assistance Coordinator or the Bishop's Delegate in Matters Pertaining to Sexual Misconduct by Clergy, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; phone: (507) 359-2966.

Si usted, o alguien a quien conoce, ha sido explotado sexualmente por un clero y necesita hablar con alguien sobre abuso, explotación o acoso sexual, por favor ponerse en contacto con el Coordinador de Asistencia para Víctimas de la Diócesis de New Ulm o con el Delegado del Obispo en Asuntos que Pertenecen al Abuso Sexual por Cleros de la Diócesis de New Ulm, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; número de teléfono (507) 359-2966.

He also noted that "the number of dioceses and eparchies refusing to be audited increased from five to seven." Previously the National Review Board expressed concern for the Diocese of Lincoln, which has consistently refused to be audited. "However, the Bishop of Baker in Oregon also declined to be audited because he has declined to have safe environment training for children in the diocese. The Board and the USCCB Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People have spent much effort over the past two years supporting safe environment training by offering professionally developed suggestions for that work. We continue to believe that safe environment training is very important to protecting children. We hope the Conference will encourage open dialogue on any reservations bishops may have about this part of the *Charter* implementation."

(courtesy of www.usccb.org)

Upcoming Safe Environment sessions

In an effort to comply with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth People*, the Diocese of New Ulm maintains a "safe environment" program. All employees in the diocese, as well as volunteers who work unsupervised with minors, are required to attend a VIRTUS *Protecting God's Children* training session.

Parents and other interested parishioners are also welcome to attend at any scheduled site. The introductory VIRTUS session is attended once. Follow-up training for employees and volunteers is done online annually or quarterly depending on one's status as determined by the diocesan safe environment coordinator. This is the third year of the VIRTUS program.

UPCOMING SESSIONS ARE:

April 25, 2009, 9:30 a.m. at St. John, Appleton; and May 19, 2009, 6:30 p.m. at St. John, Ortonville.