



SAINT VINCENT ARCHABBAY

Response to Reports of Child Abuse

POLICY:

It is the policy of Saint Vincent Archabbey that sexual misconduct or abuse of any type involving a child by any Member of the Benedictine Community shall not be tolerated under any circumstances. The Archabbey is committed to responding promptly to allegations/reports of abuse, reaching out to victims and families for healing and reconciliation, cooperating fully with the appropriate civil authorities, educating the monastic community, and ensuring the accountability of the guidelines and procedures established to deal with allegations/reports of abuse.

The Archabbey has the most sincere concern to promote healing and reconciliation for anyone who has suffered from any kind of child abuse and considers this a matter of the gravest concern. The Archabbey responds to all allegations/reports of abuse or misconduct with great care. Reporting and knowledge of any such abuse incidents requires a timely response so that the safety of the child and the community is assured and the healing process may begin.

When an allegation/report of child abuse, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation has been made against a member of the Benedictine Community of Saint Vincent Archabbey, the following actions will be taken consistent with the directives of the Catholic Bishop's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Archabbey Policy: Creating a Safe Environment for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons:

1. The Archabbey's Delegate for Child Protection, a lay professional, will listen to, understand, offer help, and respond promptly to any person(s) who contacts the Archabbey or the Office of Child Protection, by any means, concerning any allegation/report of child abuse. The Delegate will receive the information and will inform the Archabbot. The Archabbot/Delegate and or the Complainant may request a mutual meeting to initially discuss the facts of the allegation/report. A thorough evaluation and investigation of the alleged incident will be conducted with the results submitted to the Archabbey Review Board. The Review Board will examine all aspects of the allegation/report and the subsequent investigation and render a recommendation to the Archabbot to assist in the reconciliation and healing for the victim and the appropriate intervention with the accused member.
2. When the Archabbey is informed of an allegation/report of child abuse by any of its Members, the Archabbey will address the needs and rights of all involved, including the person alleging abuse, the accused, the Archabbey, and the larger community affected.
3. When an allegation/report of child abuse has been made, the Delegate will maintain contact with the individual (or parent or guardian of a minor) and his or her family, if appropriate. Psychological counseling, pastoral care, or

the assistance of an advocate for healing may be offered to the victim. If the Archabbey offers counseling, arrangements will include confidential payment by the Archabbey directly to the therapist. The selected therapist will be one who specializes in the treatment of victims of child abuse.

4. If it appears that the allegation/report concerns recent abuse by a Member of the Archabbey Community, the Complainant will be encouraged to report the suspected abuse directly to the civil authorities. The Delegate for Child Protection and or the Archabbot will ensure that all reported allegations/reports are brought to the attention of the proper civil authorities, (e.g. District Attorney, the appropriate Police Agency, and or Child Protective Service Agency) and when required by the guidelines set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, notification will be made to the 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-932-0313). In addition, if appropriate, the Delegate and or the Archabbot will also ensure that a written report is made within 48 hours of the telephone report on DHS form CY-47 and sent to the Child Protective Services Agency in the county in which the suspected abuse occurred.
5. The Archabbey will cooperate fully with civil authorities in their criminal investigation. The Archabbey's internal investigation may continue concurrent to the civil investigation to ensure compliance with Canon Law regarding the accused Member.
6. Unless the civil authorities request otherwise, the accused member will also be informed of the allegation/report by the Archabbot and will be given every opportunity to respond to the accusation. The Archabbot, upon receipt of a credible and substantiated allegation/report will remove the accused Member from his ministerial assignment and place the member on administrative leave, being sure to afford and advise the accused member of his civil and canonical rights. The Archabbot will also arrange for a complete psychological evaluation for the accused member.
7. With all due respect for the privacy and the reputations of all involved individuals, the Archabbey will deal as openly as possible with the larger community directly affected by the alleged ministerial misconduct with minors.

CONCLUSION:

The Archabbey calls upon anyone with knowledge of a Member's inappropriate behavior, whether past or present, to come forward with this information so that innocent victims may be spared from further harm. We ask everyone to join with us to protect the safety of children, women, and men and with firm determination, to promote healing and reconciliation from any instances of misconduct or abuse.

WHERE TO REPORT OR SEEK HELP:

If you or someone you know believes that a Member of the Benedictine Community of Saint Vincent Archabbey has committed an act of sexual misconduct, harassment, exploitation, or abuse; you are urged to report such behavior immediately to the Archabbot or Delegate for Child Protection. Your allegation will be handled with the strictest sensitivity and confidentiality.

Here is the contact information for the Archabbey:

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