



Diocese of Grand Island

Victim Assistance Ministry

Procedures

Victim Assistance Coordinators

Volunteer Victim Assistance Coordinators are appointed in various locations across the Diocese. Victim Assistance Coordinators are required to have a background in mental health, counseling, or social services. Volunteers include both male and female assistance coordinators and at least one assistance coordinator fluent in Spanish.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator serves as the first point of contact for individuals reporting allegations of Sexual Abuse by Clergy. Victim Assistance Coordinators also serve as a resource to leadership and parishioners of the diocese regarding the identification and reporting of sexual abuse and appropriate referrals for mental health services. Victim Assistance Coordinators are responsible for:

- Answering and returning phone calls regarding abuse allegations in a timely manner.
- Documenting reported allegations.
- Gathering information regarding motivation, functioning, and needs of individuals seeking services and reporting allegations.
- Forwarding information to the Diocesan Child Protection Office and Diocesan Chancellor
- Maintaining communication with the Diocesan Child Protection Office
- Evaluating current outreach efforts and offering feedback.

Victim Assistance Ministry is coordinated by the Diocesan Child Protection Office Director. Consultation, guidance, professional support and training is provided to Victim Assistance Coordinators by the Diocesan Office of Child Protection.

Continuing Education

Victim Assistance Coordinators are offered the opportunity for continuing education through participation in the Victim Assistance Ministry Conference and Diocesan Safe Environment programs.

Victim Assistance Contact Information

Victim Assistance contact information shall be made available to all members of the Catholic community. Contact information is to be posted as an official announcement in public areas of diocesan parishes, schools and facilities. Additional contact information is to be posted in more secluded areas with public access (e.g. men's and women's bathrooms) where individuals may access the information with some degree of privacy / confidentiality. Contact information should be provided in English and Spanish with Spanish speaking assistance coordinators clearly identified as such. It is recommended that parishes include victim assistance contact information in their bulletins. Periodic announcements are to be included in the West Nebraska Register.

Victim Assistance Ministry

The USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People mandates that all dioceses appoint a qualified / competent Victim Assistance Coordinator.

Victim assistance services are to provide outreach to victims of clergy sexual abuse through a pastoral response and to serve as the primary point of contact for individuals reporting allegations of abuse by clergy.

Pastoral Outreach shall be provided through prayer, supportive caring response, and respectful, dignified guidance in reporting allegations and seeking treatment. When available / appropriate, additional outreach, including support groups and healing masses, will be offered.

Documenting and Reporting of Allegations shall follow a standard format, developed by the victim assistance coordinators and coordinated by the director of the Diocesan Child Protection Office.

The Diocesan Office of Child Protection is to be alerted immediately following the receipt of any allegations.

Documentation of allegations shall be completed and forwarded to the Diocesan Office of Child Protection within 24 hours of a received allegation.

Documented information shall be forwarded to the Diocesan Bishop and Chancellor, who will alert the Diocesan Review Board.

Investigation shall follow the policy for responding to allegations of clergy abuse derived from the Diocesan Child Protection Policy and the bylaws of the Diocesan Review Board.

Victim Assistance Coordinators shall maintain necessary communication with individuals reporting allegations or requesting services. They may be asked to provide their clinical impressions regarding the motivation, functioning, and needs of the individual, but will not serve as an investigator of allegations.

Therapeutic Services funded through the diocese as part of outreach to victims of clergy sexual abuse are to be monitored by the Director of Child Protection. A limited number of sessions will be funded during investigation of allegations. If allegations are substantiated, funding will continue based on review of therapy progress summaries submitted by the treating therapist. Funding will be provided for services from a licensed mental health provider or psychologist with experience in treating sexual abuse. Victim assistance coordinators are to serve as a resource and point of contact for victims, but are not assigned to provide therapeutic services as part of their victim assistance role.