

**Diocese of Cheyenne**  
**Norms for Responding to Reports of**  
**Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, Revised Edition**  
**June 29, 2023**

**I. Introduction**

The Diocese of Cheyenne has been blessed with many excellent and upstanding bishops, priests and deacons who constitute the diocesan clergy for the Catholic Church in the State of Wyoming. They have served and continue to serve the People of God diligently and faithfully, some as vicars of the diocesan bishop or members of the diocesan curia and most as pastors, parochial vicars, and other parish ministers. Incidents of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by some clerics have demonstrated a need to emphasize the procedure which will be followed in response to reports of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults brought to the attention of the Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne.

In addition to the clergy, the Diocese of Cheyenne has been blessed with the devoted, talented, and upstanding ministry of dedicated lay people. Because reports of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults may be made against a member of the laity employed by the Diocese, a parish or an organization affiliated with the Diocese, or against one who has volunteered, these procedures will guide the response in such cases.

**II. General Statement**

The Diocese of Cheyenne will manage the issue of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clergy, staff, and volunteers in an open and straightforward manner. We will respond with compassion to those who have been harmed, take action to redress the wrongs, extend God's healing love to all those injured and protect and promote the safety of minors and vulnerable adults. The Safe Environment Training of all Church personnel on maintaining appropriate boundaries and on the issue of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is required.

Our actions will be grounded in a commitment to justice, accountability, and mercy. In the event of an allegation, we will stand by all parties while maintaining the right of the congregation to a safe and secure environment in which to worship and pray together.

We are committed to regularly reviewing and refining our norms and procedures. We will comply with all laws regarding the reporting to civil authorities of allegations of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.

### III. Description of Terms

**Diocese** is the Catholic Diocese of Cheyenne, which encompasses the State of Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park. The Diocese is incorporated as the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cheyenne. Although parishes are part of the Diocese of Cheyenne, they are also, by virtue of canon law, their own ecclesiastical juridic persons and are separately incorporated. Some parishes operate their own schools, which are under the canonical and corporate control of the respective parishes. There are also other schools that are their own corporations and have sought recognition as ecclesiastical juridic persons. Related to the Diocese of Cheyenne are certain separately incorporated works, such as Catholic Charities of Wyoming, which are also considered juridic persons.

**Diocesan Review Board** is a group of individuals appointed by the Bishop of Cheyenne. This Board assists the Bishop in assessing allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. The Board makes recommendations to the Bishop about the fitness for ministry or employment of someone who has been accused of sexual misconduct or abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult. The Review Board also will assist with the regular review of the *Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults*.

**Child Pornography** is any representation of a minor, regardless of the means used, involving explicit sexual activities, (whether real or simulated), or any representation of sexual organs or other inappropriate images of minors (as determined by the Diocese of Cheyenne) for purposes of sexual gratification or profit. (This statement is intended to comply with all applicable law, and it incorporates definitions and other requirements of applicable law to the extent necessary to ensure such compliance. If any statement herein is inconsistent with applicable law, the applicable law shall replace that provision to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with applicable law.)

**Child abuse** means inflicting or causing physical or mental injury, harm or imminent danger to the physical or mental health or welfare of a minor other than by accidental means, including abandonment; excessive or unreasonable corporal punishment; malnutrition or substantial risk thereof by reason of intentional or unintentional neglect; and the commission or allowing the commission of a sexual offense against a minor as defined by applicable law. Child abuse also includes pornography in all its forms shown to, depicting, or otherwise related to a child in any manner. Neglect includes the failure of a parent or custodian to provide adequate care, support for education, medication, or other care necessary for the minor's well-being and/or failure to report a reasonable suspicion of such neglect to appropriate officials. (This statement is intended to comply with all applicable law, and it incorporates definitions and other requirements of applicable law to the extent necessary to ensure such compliance. If any statement herein is inconsistent with applicable law, the applicable law shall replace that provision to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with applicable law.)

**Church personnel** include all employees and volunteers (clergy, religious, seminarians, deacon candidates, extern clergy and laity) of the Diocese of Cheyenne, parishes, schools, or other entities subject to the Bishop of Cheyenne. See definition of volunteer below.

**Minor** is a person under the age of eighteen, or who is considered by law to be the equivalent of a minor.

**Sexual abuse** includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and any behavior by which an adult uses a minor or a vulnerable adult as an object of sexual gratification. Sexual abuse includes behavior that is contrary to Catholic moral doctrine and to the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church and that is unlawful as described by the laws of Wyoming. Sexual abuse does not need to be a complete act of intercourse. Sexual abuse, to be an objectively grave act, does not need to involve force, physical contact, or a discernible harmful outcome. The acquisition, possession, or distribution of pornographic images of minors for purposes of sexual gratification or profit, by whatever means and using whatever technology, is a form of sexual abuse of a minor.

**Victim Assistance Coordinator** is a person appointed by the Bishop to assist victims and their families when they report sexual misconduct or abuse by Church personnel. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will verify that the authorities have been properly notified, will inform victims and, if minors, their families about counseling and pastoral assistance opportunities, and will keep the victim and, if a minor, his or her family informed about the progress of any internal investigation.

**Volunteer** (see Church personnel) is defined by these norms as a person who acts in a volunteer (unpaid) capacity for the Diocese of Cheyenne, a parish, school, or other Church entity. This category includes but is not limited to coaches, youth ministers, catechists and religious educators, retreat leaders, after-school activity coordinators, classroom assistants, parish ministry coordinators, tutors, parents, guardians, etc.

**Vulnerable Adults** is any person over the age of eighteen (18) in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, even occasionally, limits his or her ability to understand or to want or to otherwise resist the offense and is unable to manage and take care of himself or his money, assets or property without assistance.

#### **IV. Obligation to Report**

There are two distinct types of reporting: internal and external. Internal reporting provides notice to diocesan officials of suspected instances of *sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults*. External reporting provides notice to local law enforcement agencies of suspected instances of *sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults*.

**Internal Reporting:** Church personnel who know or reasonably suspect an incident of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults shall immediately provide a detailed report of the suspected incident as follows:

In the case of an accusation against Church personnel it should be reported to the Chancellor (307-638-1530 ext. 105). The contact information for the Victim's Assistance Coordinator can be found on the Diocesan website ([www.dcwyo.org](http://www.dcwyo.org)).

The Chancellor will inform the Bishop of all reports of alleged sexual abuse. Unless circumstances warrant otherwise, the Chancellor will promptly notify the administrator of any organization affiliated with the Diocese (hereinafter called organization) of an accusation against personnel of that organization. When an accusation is brought against a cleric involving a matter reserved to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the preliminary investigation indicates there is reasonable cause to believe the truth of the matter, the matter will be referred to the Dicastery.

**External Reporting:** Wyoming law requires citizens to report knowledge of, as well as every reasonably suspected incident of, neglect or abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, of a minor or vulnerable adult to the Department of Family Services and/or the local authority(ies).

Individuals who have any doubt regarding their external reporting obligations shall consult with the Chancellor, who shall consult with diocesan counsel. Diocesan counsel shall be consulted on all new allegations. The Chancellor will ensure that every reasonably suspected incident of abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult that the Chancellor is made aware of shall be reported to the Department of Family Services or the local authority(ies), as appropriate.

Those making external reports are to make them by phone *and in writing* to the Department of Family Services or the local police or sheriff. A written report must also be submitted to the Chancellor on the *Diocese of Cheyenne Abuse of Minor or Vulnerable Adult Reporting Form*. Copies of the form may be acquired from the Chancellor, from the administrator of any affiliate of the Diocese of Cheyenne or on the Diocesan Website ([www.dcwyo.org](http://www.dcwyo.org)). To report an allegation of sexual abuse by a bishop, people should access the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at <https://reportbishopabuse.org>.

Subject to certain exceptions, Wyoming law states that any person who participates "in good faith in any act required or permitted by (the Act)...is immune from any civil or criminal liability for making the report." (*Wyoming Statutes*, § 14-3-209.)

**Canonical Privileges Observed:** Confidential statements made under the seal of confession are inviolate under canon law and must never be disclosed. Accordingly, both internal and external reporting requirements established by this policy do not apply when the information giving rise to the duty to report is acquired exclusively through sacramental confession.

## **V. Assistance to Victims and Community**

The Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne will designate a competent Victim Assistance Coordinator to organize and direct outreach to victims and the delivery of victim assistance and support services to persons who claim to be victims of sexual misconduct.

The Victim's Assistance and Safe Environment Coordinator shall ensure that those who state that they have been harmed, together with their families, are to be treated with dignity and respect, and, in particular, are to be welcomed, listened to and supported, including through provision of specific services; offered spiritual assistance; offered medical assistance, including therapeutic and psychological assistance, as required by the specific case. The good name and the privacy of the persons involved, as well as the confidentiality of their personal data, shall be protected, to the extent reasonably possible. Such assistance is an expression of pastoral outreach and shall not, in any way, be considered as an indication of legal responsibility for the actions of the accused.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Cheyenne shall also recommend pastoral, psychological, and spiritual support to victims, their families and to the faith community of the Diocese.

## **VI. Diocesan Investigation**

Any allegation that appears to be reasonable shall undergo a preliminary canonical penal investigation. The accused enjoys the presumption of innocence, and his good name must not be illegitimately harmed. This investigation should be conducted promptly and objectively.

The Bishop appoints an Investigator, who has the obligation and authority to collect the facts and circumstances surrounding the allegation. The Investigator may choose other individuals to assist in conducting the investigation. The Chancellor should help to identify persons who have expertise in relevant fields, such as law enforcement, criminal investigation, civil law, canon law, psychology, and social work. The Investigator and others assisting in the investigation may be laypersons. Depending upon the situation and the decision of the Investigator, diocesan counsel may be present and assist with the interviews.

The Bishop and the Investigator must not interfere with any criminal investigation that might take place regarding the accusation. At times, this might mean that the preliminary canonical penal investigation is deferred until a criminal investigation has been completed.

## **VII. Diocesan Review Board**

- A. Purpose: The Diocesan Review Board provides the Bishop with added perspective and consultation regarding allegations, fitness and norms and procedures related to the prevention and processing of allegations of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. The Diocesan Review Board will review each circumstance investigated by a Diocesan Investigator(s) involving an allegation of sexual misconduct or abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. The

Diocesan Review Board will provide the Bishop with independent consultation on such matters. It will:

1. Assess investigated allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and make a recommendation to the Bishop;
2. Assess the fitness for assignment and ministry of clergy, staff, and volunteers (with the exception of religious) when an allegation about them involves the sexual abuse of minors and other vulnerable adults;
3. Review the *Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults*, any revisions of the norms and procedures regarding the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults;
4. Provide advice and consultation regarding other matters as requested by the Bishop or the Chancellor; and
5. Respect the confidentiality of information provided to the Board and preserve the confidential and privileged character of its deliberations and advice.
6. Although the Chancellor or Victims Assistance Coordinator may have a duty to externally report certain allegations to civil authorities, the Diocesan Review Board may also recommend a “cause to report” should circumstances require it.

#### B. Members

The Diocesan Review Board will consist of at least five voting members who will be uncompensated for their services and not otherwise in the employ of the Diocese.

1. One member should have particular expertise in the treatment of those who have experienced sexual abuse as minors or vulnerable adults.
2. In consultation with and recommendation of the Diocesan Review Board, the Bishop will appoint all members of the Diocesan Review Board for five-year staggered terms.
3. Candidates for membership on the Diocesan Review Board must be in full communion with the Catholic Church, of upstanding moral character, and of proven faith, good morals, and good reputation.
4. Candidates for membership must have successfully completed background checks and safe environment training provided by the Diocese.
5. The Chancellor will serve as support staff.

C. Deliberations

When the Diocesan Review Board meets to assess allegations and fitness for ministry, the Investigator(s) and diocesan legal counsel may be present. A canonist may be present, as needed. The Bishop may be present so that he might better understand the case, ask questions for clarification, respond to questions from the Board, or seek their advice on related matters (e.g., Is there sufficient information to restrict the cleric's exercise of his office?). However, if the Diocesan Review Board would find it helpful to deliberate without the Bishop present, then he shall respect their wishes.

While everyone present may participate in the Diocesan Review Board discussion, the Diocesan Review Board members alone should finally formulate a recommendation regarding any question put before the Diocesan Review Board.

**VIII. Treatment of the Accused**

In both civil and canon law, a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. The presumption of innocence, however, does not preclude the Diocese of Cheyenne from taking immediate, prudent action to protect individuals and the community in response to complaints and before an investigation is complete. A prompt, objective investigation of the allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult shall be undertaken. During this investigation, the Diocese of Cheyenne will take appropriate steps to protect the reputation of the accused, to assure the exercise of other rights afforded him under canon law, and to restore his good name if it has been illegitimately harmed. Nothing herein will negatively impact the protection afforded the alleged victim during the investigation process.

After an allegation is made, no bishop or priest involved in the investigation may hear the sacramental confession of the accused.

Bishops: When a reasonable allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult has been made against a Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, whether past or present, the Chancellor of the Diocese will ensure that a report is submitted to the appropriate authorities, as outlined in Article 8 of *Vos estis lux mundi*.

Other Clergy: When a reasonable allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult has been made against a priest or deacon, the Diocese of Cheyenne will initiate a prompt and objective preliminary canonical penal investigation. At any point after the allegation has been received, the Bishop may exclude the accused cleric from performing sacred ministry, restrict the exercise of his office or ecclesiastical function, determine where the cleric will or will not reside, or prohibit his public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist. Any restrictions on the accused cleric will be reevaluated at the conclusion of the preliminary canonical penal investigation and may continue during any canonical penal process. Salary and benefits and arrangements for room and board will be provided during the preliminary canonical penal investigation and any subsequent canonical penal process.

When the preliminary canonical penal investigation has been concluded, the matter is to be referred to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Non-Clergy Church Personnel: When a reasonable allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult has been made against a lay person or religious, the Diocese of Cheyenne will initiate a prompt and objective investigation. At any point after the allegation has been received, the accused may be placed on administrative leave until the diocesan investigation is concluded. Paid Church personnel may continue to receive pay and benefits until the conclusion of the diocesan investigation.

Legal Counsel: The accused may retain civil and canonical counsel.

Pastoral and Psychological Support: The accused will be offered pastoral, psychological and spiritual support from approved counselors. If the accused is married or has a family, pastoral, psychological and spiritual support will also be offered to the accused's spouse and children.

The Bishop may refer an accused cleric for psychological assessment, evaluation, counseling and/or treatment. If the accused declines to participate, he is non-cooperative with the process, or refuses to release information to the Bishop, these actions will be considered in determining the future ministry of the accused cleric.

Accused non-clergy Church personnel also may be referred for psychological assessment, evaluation, counseling and/or treatment. If the accused declines to participate, is non-cooperative with the process, or refuses to release information, the accused may be dismissed immediately, regardless of the outcome of the diocesan investigation.

When allegations are substantiated, the Diocese of Cheyenne may seek restitution from the offender for the services provided to persons harmed by the offender's sexual abuse. The offender may be held responsible for the costs of therapy and for all other expenses incurred by the Diocese, including, but not limited to, attorney fees, court costs and judgment.

## **IX. Transfer of Clergy**

A priest or deacon who has engaged in sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult shall not be transferred from one parish to another within the Diocese of Cheyenne and shall not be approved for ministry or incardination in another diocese. When a priest or deacon seeks to reside in another diocese, the Bishop of Cheyenne shall forward, in a confidential manner by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the diocesan bishop of the proposed place of residence, any and all information concerning the cleric's sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult and any other information that he has been or may be a danger to minors or vulnerable adults.



## **X. Disciplinary Action**

If Church personnel have not complied with the expectations in the *Instruction Concerning Interactions with Minors and Vulnerable Adults* (2018) corrective action may be applied and range from a warning or reprimand up to and including termination or loss of office, depending upon the seriousness of the behavior. If non-clergy church personnel have been determined to have sexually abused a minor or vulnerable adult, the individual will be permanently removed from his or her position or appointment. If a cleric has been determined to have sexually abused a minor or vulnerable adult, the Bishop will, in accordance with the norms of canon law, enforce the determination by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. When the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been imposed, the offender is to lead a life of prayer and penance, and may be forbidden from exercising any sacred ministry, office, or function, from wearing clerics, and from presenting himself publicly as a priest or deacon.

## **XI. Release of Information**

Generally, the release of information concerning the sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults and the timing of the release are decided upon on a case-by-case basis.

When there is a release of information, the welfare of minors, vulnerable adults, and the community will be taken into consideration. The Diocese of Cheyenne will consistently notify the people of the Diocese and the general public of its *Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors or Vulnerable Adults*.

The Executive Director of Communication is the designated spokesperson who speaks on behalf of the Bishop of Cheyenne. The spokesperson shall be responsible for responding to all inquiries and news conferences regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults and will be informed upon receipt of any allegations.

All complaints to the Diocese of Cheyenne are treated as confidential to the extent allowed by applicable law. Until such time as an allegation becomes public record as a result of charges being filed or the matter has become general public knowledge, or the nature of the allegation warrants, the Diocese of Cheyenne will neither confirm nor deny to the media:

- a. That a complaint has been made;
- b. The identity of any person reporting incidents, concerns, or allegations; and,
- c. The identity of any person against whom a complaint is pending.
- d. When deemed necessary and appropriate, in the sole discretion of the Diocese of Cheyenne, the Diocese of Cheyenne will take appropriate action to ensure the safety of minors, vulnerable adults, and the community.

Once the allegation has become public record, and to the extent allowed by applicable law and otherwise appropriate to do so, as determined in the Diocese of Cheyenne's sole discretion, the Diocese of Cheyenne will identify to the media the name of the accused, the

nature of the allegations, and the course of action pursued by the Diocese. The Diocese shall state:

- a. That it is cooperating with any criminal investigation,
- b. That it is conducting its own preliminary canonical penal investigation, and
- c. That it has taken appropriate action to ensure the safety of minors and vulnerable adults.

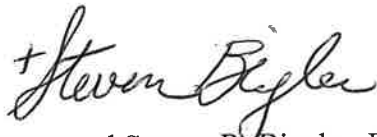
Once the accusation has been investigated and determined to be credible, a public announcement will be made to the Diocese as a whole, parishes, Catholic schools, other Catholic entities, and to the general public. The announcement will state:

- a. That an accusation has been determined to be credible;
- b. That the Diocese is cooperating with any and all criminal investigations;
- c. The name of the accused, the nature of the offense, and any restrictions for the accused;
- d. That assistance is being offered to the victim.

## **XII. Training**

Church personnel are required to participate in the Safe Environment Training of the Diocese of Cheyenne. The training includes standards of conduct for persons in positions of trust with regard to signs and indicators of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, the neglect or abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and the means of reporting. Safe environment training will also be offered to parents, guardians, volunteers, minors, and vulnerable adults.

*The Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, Revised Edition, becomes effective June 29, 2023, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles, and I abrogate all others.*



Most Reverend Steven R. Biegler, DD, STL  
Bishop of Cheyenne



Jean M. Chrostoski  
Chancellor

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AFFIRMATION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received  
**(Please print your name)**  
and reviewed the *Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, Revised Edition* of the Diocese of Cheyenne effective June 29, 2023.

I understand that this policy applies not only to diocesan employees, but also to employees of parishes, schools, and affiliated organizations, as well as other Church workers identified in these norms. I affirm that I will comply with all obligations described by these Norms and any subsequent revisions of these Norms.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Attachment 1**

**DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE  
FORM FOR REPORTING THE ABUSE OF MINORS OR VULNERABLE ADULTS**

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Department of Family Services or Local Police or Sheriff**

**FROM:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name Address**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title City, State, Zip**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Name, address, age, gender, and race of the minor or vulnerable adult:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Name and address of the alleged perpetrator or the person or persons responsible for the suspected abuse or neglect:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Nature and extent of the abuse, neglect, or injury to the minor or vulnerable adult:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Family composition:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Source(s) of the information: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Other related information:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Other mandated reporters on whose behalf this report is made:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Report was called in to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

A copy of this written report was provided to the \_\_\_\_\_

**Internal Instructions**

*The Wyoming child abuse reporting statute requires all persons to report reasonably suspected instances of child abuse or neglect or instances in which a person has observed a child being subjected to circumstances or conditions which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect. Reports should immediately be made or caused to be made to the Department of Family Services at (307) 777-6800, 1510 East Pershing Boulevard, Cheyenne, WY 82001 or the local police or sheriff. Any questions regarding reporting obligations or procedures may be discussed with the Chairperson of the Diocesan Investigation Team or with the Vicar General, either of whom may consult with the diocesan counsel. Reports should be made both by phone and in writing to the agency. When several Church personnel are aware of the reportable situation, and those individuals are each mandated reporters, the person making the report should do so on behalf of each Church personnel mandated to report and must provide a copy of the report to the Chancellor, who will distribute a copy of the report to each such mandated reporter, to the Vicar General, and to diocesan legal counsel.*