



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment



4044 Nelthorpe St., Victoria, BC, V8X 2A1 – Tel: (250) 479-1331 – Fax: (250) 479-5423 – Web: redvictoria.org

October 4, 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The recent disclosure of sexual abuse committed by clergy in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania has indeed been disturbing for many Catholics. I too have felt a personal sense of betrayal. The need for a comprehensive healing strategy has never been greater. There is also a great deal of work ahead for the Church in re-establishing trust that children and the vulnerable are protected. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops have begun this rebuilding process with the release of Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation. While we look to Pope Francis and leadership of the Church to further spearhead this change we, the laity, can and should do much more to ensure safety and accountability. This process begins with and is fundamentally a part of parish life.

Our Diocese has taken a very active leadership role in ensuring that parishes and schools have the tools and resources necessary to protect children and vulnerable adults. In 2011 our Diocese released our comprehensive **Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy (RMSE)**. This policy provides a set of safeguarding standards that all members of our faith community must follow. In 2015, the Diocese hired a Registered Social Worker (myself) as Diocesan Responsible Ministry (DRM) Coordinator and an Office of Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment was created. A volunteer Parish Responsible Ministry (PRM) Coordinator position was created in each parish and an equivalent position in each school.

We have a comprehensive process to help ensure a safe environment throughout the Diocese. This process involves:

- Creating policy and setting standards;
- Comprehensive screening and selection process for clergy, religious, employees and volunteers;
- Training to raise individual and community awareness and responsibility;
- Monitoring and supervising to ensure transparency, assess risk and monitor high risk activities;
- Creating an internal feedback system: creating a complaint process, removing barriers to reporting concerns or complaints, ensure information moves effectively and efficiently;
- Parishioner and stakeholder participation;
- Establishing consistent response methods;
- Creating and supporting an organizational culture of safety.

A key part of this process involves the selection and screening of volunteers, employees, and all clergy. The RMSE Policy provides a comprehensive list of volunteer positions within the Diocese. Each position lists the screening protocol required for the position as well as the risk level. The PRM for each parish is responsible for ensuring that each position is screened according to these policy requirements.

The screening of Medium and High Risk volunteers involves:

- Completion of an Application Form;
- Signing a Covenant of Care agreement;
- Obtaining a criminal record check Clearance Letter from the provincial Ministry of Justice, Criminal Record Review Program;
- Reference checks;
- Individual interview(s);
- Completion of a training program;
- Provision of a clear job description;
- Orientation to the position;
- On-going supervision and guidance.

An Advisory Committee for Responsible Ministry & Safe Environment, primarily comprised of lay members, oversees the implementation of the RMSE Policy and provides strategic advice and direction to the Diocesan Responsible Ministry Coordinator. Through the Advisory Committee we monitor compliance with RMSE Policy through an annual audit and work with each parish and school to ensure that their staff are trained and knowledgeable in RMSE protocols. Over the next few months we will be introducing a new, online training system that will offer us a greater ability to provide abuse prevention training and monitor the processes of each parish and school. This training program will greatly improve our ability to reach every priest, deacon, religious, employee and volunteer working in the Diocese. It will also allow us to verify that all participants have completed the appropriate level of training, are aware of and compliant with RMSE Policy and have a basic level of knowledge about abuse prevention.

The Diocese requires anyone who has reason to believe that a child is in need of protection report their suspicion immediately to the Ministry of Child & Family Development (MCFD) at: **1-800-663-9122**.

Additional contact information and helpful guiding information can be found in our policy online at: <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/responsible-ministry>

Anyone who has experienced abuse will be heard, respected, and offered a pastoral non-judgemental response.

Anyone working or volunteering within the Diocese who is suspected of abuse will be removed immediately from their position. Anyone found guilty of abuse will be permanently removed from their position.

Should anyone have any concerns, past or present, in our Diocese, please contact me immediately at the following confidential toll-free number: **1-877-237-7233**.

Yours in Christ,



Greg Beattie MSW, RSW
Responsible Ministry & Safe Environment Coordinator