

Maintaining Safe Environments

An updated Report on Clerical Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Diocese of Worcester

*God of endless love,
Ever caring, ever strong,
Your only Son was delivered into the hands of the wicked,
Yet healed us with the blood of his cross.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

This Prayer for Victims began the report by Bishop Emeritus Daniel P. Reilly in February 2004 titled “Creating a Safe Environment,” which summarized the scope of clerical sexual abuse in the Diocese of Worcester from 1950 to 2004 (see worcestardiocese.org/useful-links). Having marked the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the U.S. Bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People adopted in Dallas (Dallas Charter), I asked that an updated local report be produced reviewing all cases of abuse for the full 72 years of the diocese through 2022. I am grateful for the assistance and support provided by the Diocesan Review Committee (DRC) in the final publication of our analysis.

As your bishop, I am profoundly sorry for the abuse of minors by priests within this diocese since its founding in 1950. I continue in my commitment with the help of many collaborators to do everything we can to ensure such abuse does not happen again.

Our diocesan report addresses the following questions:

1. What is the scope of sexual abuse of minors in our diocesan history?

2. How have we responded?
3. Are we more effective at protecting minors and responding to victims today than before the Dallas Charter was adopted?
4. What is in store for the future?

Scope

Summary of all allegations

One victim of abuse by a member of the clergy is too many. Over the past 72 years, we are grieved to report that 173 people came to the diocese with credible allegations, 93 of whom came to us since 2004. Some came directly. Others were represented by legal counsel. And still others were brought to our attention by family members either because the victim did not want to come forward or the victim had passed away.

Total Allegations: 1950 – 2022	209
<i>Credible</i>	173
<i>Unsubstantiated or unable to be proven</i>	28
<i>False/Withdrawn</i>	8

Definitions from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA):

Credible: determined to bear the “semblance of truth” (i.e. has been sufficiently substantiated by a preliminary investigation to be forwarded to the Dicastery for the Doctrine

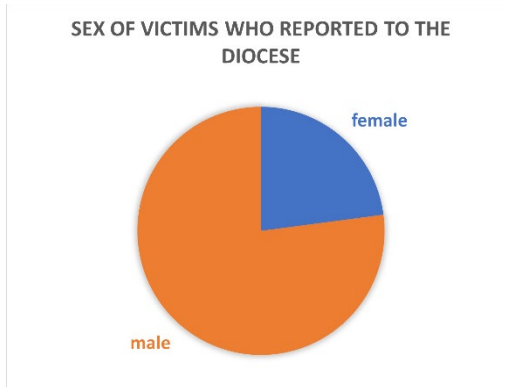
of the Faith for actions according to Canons 1717 and 1719); in the case of an allegation against a deceased perpetrator, the allegation is credible if it meets the criteria for forwarding to the Dicastery.

Unsubstantiated: determined by a preliminary investigation that insufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that the allegation has occurred as claimed.

False: determined by a preliminary investigation that the allegation could not possibly have occurred (e.g., the alleged perpetrator or alleged victim was not alive at the time.)

While the majority of abuse occurred with boys, about 25% of the allegations of abuse were with girls.

CHART 1



Trends

Our review of the data revealed three significant findings:

96% of the alleged abuse occurred prior to 1990

One allegation of abuse has been reported to have occurred since 1998. One case of child pornography occurred since 2000. Most allegations of abuse were reported to have occurred from the 1960s through the 1980s with many victims reporting that they were abused in the 1970s. This is consistent

with our 2004 report and with national studies over the past 20 years.

CHART 2



Helping survivors deal with past abuse is an ongoing reality

News reports of the removal of priests from ministry have appeared in the media since 2001, which incorrectly implied to people that the abuse was continuing to occur. Yet the abuse which led to those removals occurred decades earlier. When we studied when the abuse occurred as compared to when it was reported, there is a significant gap as seen in Chart 3.

CHART 3

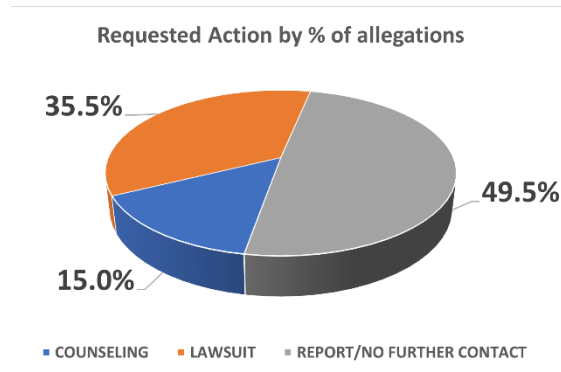


Many survivors carried the burden of this abuse for decades before ever sharing it with anyone, even with close family members. Chart 3 indicates by percentage of total allegations how many years elapsed between when the abuse was alleged to have occurred and when the person reported it to the diocese. Some of those priests who offended were already removed from ministry. In 53 allegations, the priest against whom the allegation was made was already deceased when the victim came forward.

Victims report abuse for different reasons

Actions requested by those bringing allegations to the diocese have fallen into three categories: Seeking counseling or some other form of support; represented by legal counsel and seeking monetary damages; or simply wanting to share their story. Chart 4 demonstrates how the largest percentage wanted their experience to be known and to be assured that minors were not at risk from someone serving the Church at that time.

CHART 4



Summary of Clergy

From 1950 to 2022, a total of 829 priests have served in our diocese. In the 2004 report, 755 priests were reported as being in diocesan ministry. Since then, we have ordained 59 more priests and 15 priests were incardinated (formally admitted into the Diocese of Worcester) from other dioceses or religious congregations. Those 59 ordained priests completed background screening prior to entering the seminary as well as safe environment training and the 15 priests had letters of suitability from the bishop of their prior diocese or religious superior attesting that nothing in their backgrounds would be an impediment to serving in our diocese.

Clergy (priests and deacons) with credible allegations

52 Diocesan Priests (51 from our diocese and 1 from another diocese)
1 Religious Order Priest assigned to a parish
1 Deacon

How many priests had multiple allegations of abuse?

The following Chart 5 is a compilation of how many credible allegations were made against each accused cleric (priest or deacon) while serving in our diocese. For example, 22 clerics have had one credible allegation against each of them, while 9 clerics had 3 allegations against each of them. 12 of the accused clerics account for more than half of the credible allegations.

CHART 5

# of accused clerics (priest/deacon)	# of credible allegations
22	1
5	2
9	3
6	4
3	5
2	6
3	7
2	8
1	9
1	17
Total 54	Total 173

What is the status of these accused priests now?

Zero tolerance is being practiced in our diocese.

- No priest who was removed from ministry due to a credible or substantiated allegation has returned to ministry in the Diocese of Worcester. This means they may not celebrate the sacraments or appear as a priest in clerical attire.
- All priests who were removed from ministry since the Charter was adopted have had their cases sent to the Vatican.
- 36 priests who were credibly accused were deceased as of December 2022.
- 9 priests (still living) have been removed from the clerical state, i.e. laicized (defrocked).
- 9 priests have no authority or privilege (faculties) to serve as priests and cannot present themselves publicly as priests, however they have not been

laicized (defrocked). They are required to live a life of prayer and penance.

- 3 cases are pending further Vatican determinations.

How have we responded?

We are grateful to the survivors of abuse who had the courage to share their stories with us and help us as a Church continue to strengthen a culture of healing and protection. The following highlight our ongoing efforts to do so:

- Immediately following the adoption of the Dallas Charter, our diocese established the Office for Healing and Prevention which includes a Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) who is a licensed, independent clinical social worker (LCSW) with experience in responding fairly and compassionately to victims of child abuse. There is a confidential direct phone number (508-929-4363) for victims to reach the VAC at any time.
- Following the Dallas Charter, the Diocesan Review Committee (DRC) was established to review all concerns of abuse of minors and provide expert guidance to the VAC and bishop. More than 50% of its membership is from outside the employ of the diocese. Those members include pediatricians, psychologists, and social workers with experience in child abuse and neglect, as well as legal professionals. The list of DRC members is published on our diocesan website under the Office for Healing and Prevention. (www.worcesterdiocese.org/healing-prevention-1)
- When an allegation of abuse is received, the VAC works with a member of the DRC to meet with the survivor. A report is sent to the

District Attorney's Office and is also reviewed by the DRC. The VAC can authorize immediate therapeutic or other short-term support if, in her professional judgment, it is needed to keep someone safe and/or in a stable environment. Determinations for longer term support are recommended by the DRC and support is often provided even if culpability has not been determined on behalf of the diocese itself. Each year the VAC reports new and ongoing cases to the independent national auditors.

Working with Civil Authorities

In 2002, all previous allegations of clerical sexual abuse were reported to the Office of the District Attorney (DA). Since then, when an allegation of abuse is made to the diocese, we notify the DA. We also inform those who come forward with allegations that their statement will be shared with the DA, even if the cleric who is alleged to have committed the abuse is deceased.

Financial Implications

There are various costs associated with responding to victims of past abuse and continuing to provide a safe environment for minors in our churches, schools and programs. These include financial settlements to victims; victim counseling services and therapy reimbursements; independent investigations; therapy for priests; operating the Office for Healing and Prevention, including tracking background screening of thousands of staff and volunteers; education programs for children and identifying signs of abuse for adults. We also incur legal fees when addressing

lawsuits and responding to law enforcement requests.

The "List"

I have been asked over the years why our diocese does not publish a list of accused priests as do some other dioceses in the country. I am convinced a single list will not accurately reflect the various concerns and outcomes. In addition to reporting every allegation to law enforcement, we publish and distribute widely information on every priest who is placed on administrative leave due to a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor and/or laicized and that information remains available on our website.

There is no other precedent for the publishing of lists of the accused in society - even of those accused in other positions of trust such as medicine, education or law enforcement. Such lists can be a cause for deep division among many members of our Church who see this as publicly branding as guilty those who never have been charged by law enforcement or had a chance to defend themselves in a court of law, given the fact that many decades have passed between the alleged abuse and the reporting of that abuse, or because they were already deceased when the allegation was first received. That does not stop the diocese from responding to the victims.

Are we more effective at protecting minors and responding to victims?

CHART 2, which indicates when abuse is alleged to have occurred, demonstrates a dramatic reduction in occurrences of abuse over the past three decades. We have also

witnessed more timely reporting of allegations. Many factors contribute to this:

- Children undergo periodic training about “stranger-danger” and protecting their own bodies, including the current Circle of Grace curriculum in our Catholic schools and religious education programs.
- In our diocese alone, tens of thousands of church and school staff and volunteers along with all clergy have undergone training with the Dallas Child Advocacy Center on identifying the signs of abuse.
- All priests, as well as lay employees and deacons working in our parishes and schools, are mandated reporters to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and have the additional resource of a trained clinical social worker at the diocese (the VAC).
- Applicants to the priesthood, as well as our schoolteachers, undergo extensive screening, including fingerprinting for clearance from the FBI national database.
- Seminaries have added more programs over the years focused on understanding sexuality and respecting boundaries.
- Thousands of parish and diocesan staff and volunteers are subject to routine background screening through the Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system.
- Parishes and schools are routinely audited for compliance for the policies and procedures set in place by the Dallas Charter by volunteers from the DRC.
- Our diocese has been independently audited each year for compliance with the Dallas Charter and has been found

compliant every year by the national auditors.

These changes have been happening as we see the issue of child abuse at the forefront of all media and that the fear or stigma that was associated with talking about abuse decades ago has dramatically changed in our society.

All this is being done with one goal in mind: that no child be abused by clergy, employees, or volunteers of our diocese in the future. To that end, every allegation is taken seriously.

What is in store for the future?

Given that one alleged incident of abuse has been reported to have occurred in the last 24 years, we must continue to be vigilant to address two risks: *complacency* and *fatigue*. Complacency is the danger that what we do is “good enough,” particularly in those parishes or schools where no issues or complaints have arisen for decades, if ever. Fatigue (tiring of following added procedures) sets in if the Charter’s policies are seen as extraordinary, and risk being dismissed or not taken seriously.

The reality today is that these policies and procedures are the new normal in our society and must be accepted as standard operating procedures.

We are grateful to all the victim survivors who have come forward, and those who continue to work on this issue for our diocese. We are also grateful for the vast majority of priests who remain faithful to their vocation, and who continue to faithfully serve our parishes and the

communities in which we live. At the heart of our journey of faith as Catholics is the need for continuous conversion. Simply put, we must frequently and regularly turn our eyes toward God with the hope of life eternal in heaven. In the business world, continuous improvement is the organizational equivalent of continuous

conversion. The Dallas Charter provided a roadmap for change which we regularly follow and, thanks to annual audits, make continuous improvements to “correct” our path towards a goal of zero cases of abuse of minors or vulnerable adults.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may God grant us the wisdom and the courage to continue to follow these policies which protect children and young people confided to our pastoral care.

*Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. McManus". The signature is written in a cursive style and includes a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, S.T.D.
Bishop of Worcester

January 31, 2023