



**Diocese of Fresno
VICTIM ASSISTANCE HOTLINE
559- 488-7400**

To report an incident of child abuse that occurred, past or present, within the Church by a member of the clergy, religious order, employee or volunteer, contact the city or county law enforcement agency where the alleged abuse occurred.

Then, contact the Diocese of Fresno Victim Assistance Coordinator at the above phone number.

**WHEN AN ALLEGATION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IS BROUGHT
TO THE ATTENTION OF THE BISHOP**

1) If the Allegation Creates a Reasonable Suspicion

Any allegation of sexual misconduct, which creates reasonable suspicion of its veracity, will be investigated immediately in coordination with local law enforcement agencies, as applicable, and in harmony with canon law. The Bishop may place the accused on immediate administrative leave while the investigation continues, if the Bishop deems this is necessary for the good of the faithful. In every instance, the Diocese will advise victims of their right to make a report to public authorities and will support this right. Any credible allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor will result in immediate administrative leave. Any allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor will be reported to Child Welfare Services or law enforcement agency.

2) Pastoral Outreach to the Alleged Victim and Family and Community

The Diocese will immediately contact any known alleged victim or appropriate family members in the case of minors, and offer pastoral assistance and appropriate counseling. This outreach will include provision of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services agreed upon by the victim and the Diocese. The Diocese will not enter into confidentiality agreements except for grave and substantial reasons brought forward by the victim/survivor and noted in the text of the agreement.

3) If Guilt is Determined Regarding Current or Recent Sexual Abuse of a Minor

Where sexual abuse by a cleric is admitted or is established after an appropriate investigation in accord with canon law, the following will pertain:

- a. Diocesan policy provides that for even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor – past or present – the offending cleric will be permanently removed from ministry not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants. An offending cleric will be offered professional assistance for his own healing and well-being, as well as for the purpose of prevention.
- b. In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law must be observed, and the various provisions of canon law must be considered.

4) If an Allegation is made Against a Cleric belonging to a Religious Community

When an allegation is made against a cleric belonging to a religious community, the Bishop or Vicar General will notify the religious community of the allegation immediately. The religious community will be asked to handle the complaint according to its policy and procedures. However, the Diocese of Fresno does not delegate its responsibility to report allegations brought to its attention, and will work with the religious community to assure the safety of God's people. If the allegation involves a minor, this allegation will be reported to Children's Protective Service or law enforcement agency and if the accusation is credible, he will be removed from ministry in the Diocese.

5) If the Allegation is Unsupported but it is Determined Preventative Measures could have Avoided the Accusation

If the complaint is judged to be unsupported but it is determined that reasonable precautions could have been taken to avoid any appearance of inappropriate behavior and prevent an allegation of misconduct, the Bishop may provide instruction and counseling for the cleric. The Diocese reserves the right to take all prudent measures to follow up on the matter and to monitor the behavior of the person in question, so that there is no cause for further complaints.

6) When an Allegation has proved to be Unfounded

If the allegation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken to restore the good name of the cleric.

For more details regarding diocesan response procedures, please contact the Diocese of Fresno Safe Environment Office at (559) 493-2882. A copy of the Diocesan Code of Conduct may be obtained from your local parish or school office.