



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

PASTORAL CARE POLICY

1.0 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

1.1 *Preamble.*

The damage caused by sexual abuse of minors is devastating and long-lasting. The Diocese of Sacramento is committed to reaching out to those who suffer, but especially to the victim/survivors of sexual abuse and their families. In the light of so much suffering, healing and reconciliation are beyond human capacity alone. Only God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness can lead us forward, trusting Christ's promise: "for God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26). Our Lord made this part of His commission to His apostles and disciples when He told them that whenever they showed mercy and compassion to the least ones, they showed it to Him. Jesus extended this care in a tender and urgent way. Following the example of our Lord, the Diocese of Sacramento shall be committed to extending care in a tender and urgent way to the victim/survivors of sexual abuse and their families.

1.2 *Compliance with the Charter.* Article I of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* reflects the commitment of the Diocese to reach out to the victim/survivors of sexual abuse and their families and to demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being. The first obligation of the Church with regard to the victim/survivors is for healing and reconciliation.

1.3 *Pastoral Care.*

1.3.1 *Counseling and Spiritual Assistance.* As part of this commitment, the Diocese of Sacramento shall reach out to every person who has been the victim of sexual abuse as a minor by anyone acting in the name of the Church, whether the abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past. This outreach shall include the provision of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services agreed upon by the victim/survivor and the Diocese of Sacramento.

1.3.2 *Reconciliation and Healing.* Through pastoral outreach to victim/survivors and their families, the Bishop of Sacramento shall offer to meet with them, to listen with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns, and to share the "profound sense of solidarity and concern" expressed by our Holy Father in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers. This pastoral outreach by the Bishop will also be directed to parishes and faith communities in which the sexual abuse occurred.

2.0 DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM.

2.1 *Diocesan Office of the Pastoral Care Coordinator.* The Diocese shall establish a Diocesan Office of the Pastoral Care Coordinator within the diocesan curia which shall be under the general supervision of the Moderator of the Curia.

2.2 *Pastoral Care Coordinator.* The Pastoral Care Coordinator (hereinafter "Coordinator") shall be appointed by the Bishop of Sacramento to develop, plan, oversee, and conduct the Diocese's pastoral care program for the Diocese of Sacramento.

2.2.1 The Coordinator, with the advice and approval of the Moderator of the Curia, shall develop and maintain a position description for the Coordinator. The Coordinator shall, from time to time, revise the position description consistent with the needs of the Diocese and the served communities.

2.3 Catholic Character of Pastoral Care Programs. Pastoral Care shall be provided in accordance with the teachings and canons of the Roman Catholic Church and the directives of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Sacramento. The Bishop of Sacramento shall have sole discretion to determine whether particular Pastoral Care programs conform to Roman Catholic religious belief and are in accordance with Roman Catholic religious teaching.

2.4 Definition of “Pastoral Care.” Pastoral Care, as that term is used in connection with this Policy, shall include, as appropriate, reasonable psychiatric care, psychological counseling, spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, and such other clinically sound mental health care as the circumstances reasonably warrant.

2.4.1 Reasonable requests for other forms of assistance shall be considered and responded to on a case-by-case basis.

2.4.2 Monetary payments, “damages,” “pain and suffering” compensation are legal remedies and do not constitute Pastoral Care for purposes of the Diocese’s pastoral care program.

2.4.2.1 All such requests shall be directed immediately to the Diocesan Attorney and the Vicar for Canonical Affairs for appropriate response and action.

2.4.2.2. Any contacts received by the Coordinator from legal counsel shall be immediately directed to the Diocesan Attorney and Vicar for Canonical Affairs for response and action. The Diocese shall be considered at all times a “represented party” for purposes of the California Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of California.

2.5 Approved Pastoral Care Providers. Only approved Pastoral Care providers shall be employed to provide Pastoral Care.

2.5.1 The Moderator of the Curia, in consultation with the Pastoral Care Coordinator, shall approve Pastoral Care providers to be employed by the Diocese to render Pastoral Care.

2.5.2 The Coordinator shall maintain and periodically update a list of approved Pastoral Care providers to be used by the Diocese to provide Pastoral Care.

2.6 Pastoral Care Review Committee. The Diocese shall establish a Pastoral Care Review Committee to consult with the Pastoral Care Coordinator and the Moderator of the Curia regarding appropriate and reasonable therapy, treatment regimens, appropriate Pastoral Care providers, and the like.

2.6.1 The Pastoral Care Review Committee shall consist of individuals, such as therapists, physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, appointed by the Bishop of Sacramento, upon the recommendation of the Moderator of the Curia and the Coordinator.

2.6.2 The members of the Pastoral Care Review Committee shall possess expertise in offering therapy and healing to the victims of sexual abuse and shall possess familiarity and/or knowledge of Roman Catholic religious belief and practice.

3.0 GUIDELINES FOR THE EXTENSION OF PASTORAL CARE.

3.1 *Extension of Pastoral Care.* Reasonable Pastoral Care shall be extended to complainants and their immediate family members impacted by childhood sexual abuse.

3.1.1 The Coordinator shall work with parish pastors to ensure that adequate spiritual counseling is available in parish and ecclesial communities impacted by childhood sexual abuse allegedly perpetrated by Diocese employees, volunteers, and/or priests.

3.1.2 Whether Pastoral Care shall be offered to a complainant is solely a matter of the sound discretion of Pastoral Care Coordinator. The nature, scope, and selection of Pastoral Care providers shall be a matter solely within the discretion of the Pastoral Care Coordinator and the Moderator of the Curia.

3.1.3 Pastoral Care shall be offered to sexual abuse complainants before any investigation takes place with regard to the merits of the complaint.

3.1.4 If the complainant so requests, reasonable Pastoral Care shall continue despite the commencement of litigation against the Diocese.

3.1.4.1 Moreover, reasonable Pastoral Care shall be offered to plaintiffs filing sexual abuse civil actions against the Diocese upon the express understanding that the extension of such Pastoral Care shall not be deemed an admission on the part of the Diocese.

3.1.4.2 Pastoral Care of litigants shall be coordinated through the Diocesan Attorney and Vicar for Canonical Affairs, in consultation with the Coordinator.

3.2 *Duration of Pastoral Care.* Pastoral Care shall be extended to complainants for a reasonable period of time.

3.2.1 Therapy sessions shall be offered, as appropriate, in blocks often (10) sessions. Upon the completion of ten (10) sessions, the Pastoral Care Coordinator shall request a progress assessment from the responsible therapist or other Pastoral Care provider.

3.2.2 Pastoral Care shall be continued for another ten (10) sessions if there is significant evidence that the complainant is making progress and, in the sole discretion of the Pastoral Care Coordinator (upon consultation with the Pastoral Care Review Committee), it reasonably appears that further therapy sessions will substantially benefit the complainant's mental and spiritual health.

3.2.3 If appropriate, Pastoral Care shall continue to be extended to the complainant for up to twelve (12) months.

3.2.4 If extraordinary circumstances warrant after twelve (12) months, the Pastoral Care Coordinator (upon consultation with the Pastoral Care Review Committee and the Moderator of the Curia) in his or her sole discretion may determine that further therapy sessions would substantially benefit the complainant's mental and/or spiritual health.

3.2.4.1 In such cases, Pastoral Care may be continued for another ten (10) sessions if there is significant evidence that the complainant is making progress and, in the sole discretion of the Pastoral Care Coordinator (upon consultation with the Pastoral Care Review Committee), it reasonably appears that further therapy sessions will substantially benefit the complainant's mental and spiritual health.

3.3 *Other Assistance to Claimants.* The Coordinator may extend other non-monetary assistance to complainants, such as social service and health care referrals, as the Coordinator deems necessary under the circumstances.

Approved and promulgated on the 1st day of July in the year of Our Lord 2004.