

PROMISE TO *Protect*

In response to the crisis of the sexual abuse of children by clergy in the Catholic Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops drafted a landmark document in Dallas, Texas, at its 2002 summer assembly. In this statement, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (the *Charter*), the bishops recommit themselves to victims/survivors and their families and to each other in order to ensure—to the best of their abilities—that sexual abuse of minors within the Church will **never happen again**. A comprehensive set of procedures to address allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, the *Charter* includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse.

The *Charter* directs action in the following matters:

- Creation of a safe environment for children and young people
- Healing and reconciliation for victims and survivors
- Prompt and effective response to allegations of abuse
- Cooperation with civil authorities
- Disciplining of offenders
- Providing for future accountability by establishing a national **Office of Child and Youth Protection**

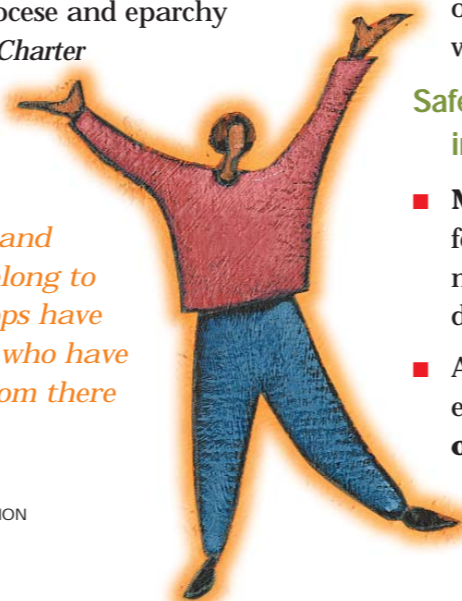
What Is the Office of Child and Youth Protection (OCYP)?

The OCYP is part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and is located at the national headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Office's work is monitored by the National Review Board, which was also established by the bishops at the 2002 Dallas meeting. According to the *Charter*, the mandate of the OCYP is threefold:

1. To assist each diocese and eparchy in the United States in implementing **safe environment programs** to ensure the necessary safety and security for all children as they participate in church and religious activities
2. To develop a **mechanism to ensure compliance** of the bishops with the responsibilities set forth in the *Charter*
3. To prepare a **public annual report** describing the compliance of each diocese and eparchy with the provisions of the *Charter*

"The victims have been the catalysts for change. Today, and all the days in the future, belong to the children whom the bishops have promised to protect, and all who have been victims of abuse for whom there was no protection."

DR. KATHLEEN MCCHESENEY, DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION



What Are Safe Environment Programs?

In 2003, the OCYP called for the planning and full implementation of safe environment programs in all dioceses and eparchies, as mandated by the *Charter*. Safe environment programs must include the following components:

- A **written code of conduct** for employees and volunteers who work with young people
- **Training programs for adults** who work regularly with minors (such as parents, ministers, educators, church personnel, and volunteers); training should include materials on prevention, identification, and response and reporting of abuse
- **Training programs for children and young people** that include materials on personal safety
- A **mechanism for background checks** of all personnel who have regular contact with minors

Safe environment programs may also include the following:

- **Methods for outreach to parents**, including formal training sessions, independent reading material, videos, and/or information on the diocesan website
- A commitment to incorporate the safe environment program into the **long-term, ongoing mission** of the diocese or eparchy

How Does the OCYP Ensure and Measure the Compliance of Dioceses and Eparchies with the *Charter*?

In 2003, the Office of Child and Youth Protection hired an independent auditor and began the first audit of all dioceses and eparchies throughout the United States to monitor compliance with safe environment program components, as well as other elements of the *Charter*. The first annual *Report on the Implementation of the Charter*, based on the findings of the auditors, was prepared by OCYP and was presented to the public in January 2004.

What Steps Has the National Review Board Taken to Address the Issue of Abuse?

In accordance with its *Charter* mandate, the National Review Board commissioned a statistical researcher, the John Jay College of Criminal Studies, to prepare a report on the nature and scope of the sexual abuse crisis in the United States. John Jay College issued its findings in February 2004 in *The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States*. At the same time, the National Review Board published its own comprehensive examination of the causes and issues related to the abuse of minors by the Catholic clergy dating back to 1950, entitled *A Report on the Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States*.