



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

## **Background on the Archdiocese of Denver's Sexual Abuse Misconduct Policy & Victims Assistance**

Since the late 1980s, the Archdiocese of Denver, under the leadership first of Cardinal Francis J. Stafford and now Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M., has worked vigorously to preclude any form of sexual misconduct from Church environments and to care for any victim of sexual abuse by archdiocesan clergy or Church or school employees. The sexual misconduct policy developed by Cardinal Stafford was formally written in 1991. At this time, Cardinal Stafford, formed a Conduct Response Team for receiving and responding to allegations of sexual abuse. The 1991 sexual misconduct policy is credited as one of the earliest and most comprehensive in the United States.

After the U.S. bishops' meeting in June 2002, the archdiocese revised the sexual misconduct policy to reflect changes in Colorado law. In addition, the Archdiocese of Denver revised its Code of Conduct to provide additional guidance to those subject to the policy. Archbishop Chaput appointed a lay person as the archdiocesan victim outreach and support coordinator to handle any allegations of sexual misconduct with children.

The Archdiocese of Denver requires all clergy, seminarians, archdiocesan and parish employees, and educators to sign a Code of Conduct, which is fully conformed to the U.S. bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Code of Conduct lays out the archdiocese's zero tolerance for sexual abuse of a child and indicates that all archdiocesan personnel are required to report promptly, in accordance with canon and civil law, any suspected sexual abuse of a child to appropriate law enforcement authorities and to the archdiocese. Additionally, all clergy, seminarians, archdiocesan and parish employees, educators and volunteers, who work regularly with children, must undergo criminal background checks.

All archdiocesan clergy, seminarians, archdiocesan and parish employees, educators, volunteers and others who have any contact with children in Church or Catholic school environments are required to participate in a safe-environment training courses. Since its inception, more than 77,000 archdiocesan and parish employees, volunteers, educators, seminarians and clergy have undergone this training.

U.S. bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People requires a regular audit of compliance with the Charter conducted by an independent audit team. The Archdiocese of Denver is in full compliance with the Charter. The safe-environment training programs, background checks and annual compliance audits are a significant and necessary financial investment by the archdiocese for the safety of children in all Church-related settings.

Archbishop Chaput, like Cardinal Stafford before him, has continuously encouraged victims of sexual abuse to report allegations of sexual abuse to both law enforcement agencies and to the archdiocese. County child abuse hotline numbers and contact information for the archdiocesan victims outreach and support coordinator are published regularly in the Denver Catholic Register, along with safe-environments awareness material. The hotline numbers for reporting abuse, the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the archdiocesan misconduct policy, safe-environment training course schedules and related material are available on the archdiocesan Web site, [www.archden.org/chilyouthprotection/](http://www.archden.org/chilyouthprotection/).