

## ***Diocese of Venice in Florida – Department of Communications***

### ***Role of the Department as specifically pertains to The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People***

#### ***Mission Statement***

The communications plan for *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* reflects a commitment by the Diocese of Venice to provide timely, open and forthright information, while safeguarding the dignity and rights of all. The diocese will actively engage the media and the community in its efforts to prevent child sexual abuse, protect children, support families and inform the public. While protecting the privacy of the individuals involved, the diocese will communicate as openly as possible with members of the faith community, media and general public regarding allegations of child sexual abuse by clergy or other church personnel. The primary concern in any situation of alleged abuse is the pastoral care of victims/survivors. In the case of adult victims/survivors, they must be assured that they will be treated with compassion and respect, offered counseling and advised of their right to make a report to civil authorities.

#### ***Promoting Policy***

- 1) Promote the existence of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, *the Diocese of Venice policy and guidelines* and our *Safe Environment Programs* through the diocesan newspaper, bulletin announcements, pastoral bulletin, news releases and the diocesan Web site.
- 2) Use the diocesan Web site to provide instant access to the USCCB Charter, diocesan policy, reporting information, review board members and victim assistance minister.
- 3) Use the bi-weekly pastoral bulletin, *The Mustard Seed*, to direct pastors, parishioners and public to Web site for Charter/policy information.
- 4) Promote through secular press via press releases, interviews, Q&A.
- 5) Use diocesan media and secular press as avenues of reaching out to victims/survivors and to encourage those who have been abused to come forward.
- 6) Provide spokesperson for media interviews/talk shows regarding this issue.

#### ***Notification of Allegations***

- 1) All communications regarding allegations of child sexual abuse will follow the laws of

the State of Florida while protecting the identity of the alleged victim and reflecting the confidential nature of the investigation.

- 2) Care will be taken to ensure that the rights of the alleged perpetrator are not violated.

### ***Internal Communications***

- 1) Notification to parishes, schools, clergy, religious, lay employees and volunteers will be made through statements/releases provided by the Department of Communications.
- 2) The diocese will endeavor to notify clergy and parishioners before the secular media in order to provide accurate and timely information. This will be done through the diocesan newspaper and bulletin and/or pulpit announcements.

### ***External Communications***

- 1) All media inquiries will be answered by the Director of Communications. No other diocesan employee is to respond to media inquiries without prior approval from the bishop.
- 2) Every effort will be made to ensure that all information is disseminated in a timely and appropriate manner. To that end, media releases will be made to appropriate bodies as advisable.
- 3) Media inquiries will be handled forthrightly without jeopardizing aspects of any legal investigation/litigation or breaching elements of confidentiality for either the alleged victim or alleged abuser.