



# Safe Environment

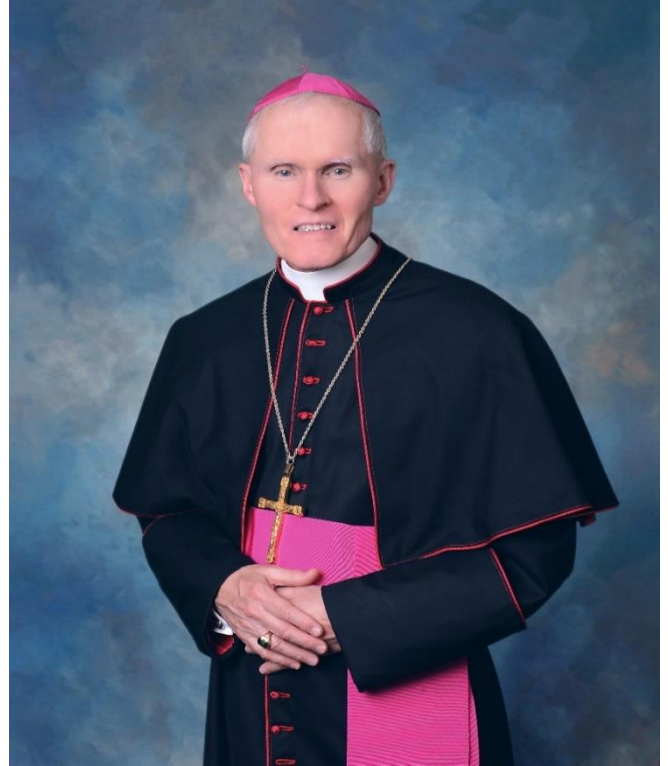
Diocese of Wheeling - Charleston

Fall 2020

## Fingerprint and Audit Initiatives Under Way

**Editor's Note:** *Greetings from the Chancery and here's wishing you all a happy, healthy fall. As we announced several months ago, Bishop Mark Brennan has implemented some new initiatives in an effort to fulfill his commitment to creating a culture of safety throughout our diocese. His announcement in February 2020 was a powerful testament of his resolve to ensure our protection and included measures above and beyond our existing Safe Environment protocol. Below is an update on the diocese's progress since Bishop Brennan's initial announcement back in February.*

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has engaged a third-party service provider, Corporate Security and Investigations (CSI), based in Monaca, Pennsylvania, to assist us in some key areas as specified by Bishop Mark Brennan. CSI is an organization comprised of experienced professionals from law enforcement, public safety, academia, and the private sector, who specialize in various services including fingerprinting, background checks, investigations, risk management, and training. CSI has been helping entities reduce risk since its founding in 1988 and presently also assists the Diocese of Pittsburgh, among many other organizations in private industry.



**Bishop Mark Brennan**

### Fingerprinting as a Background Check

Bishop Brennan has made fingerprinting a requirement for himself, all priests and deacons; all seminarians; and all Catholic school teachers, principals, staff and certain volunteers. Fingerprints are submitted to and housed with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which is running background checks in conjunction with the fingerprinting. Fingerprints will not be kept by schools or the Diocese. The Diocese was scheduled to begin the fingerprinting process



back in March; however, the progress was delayed because of COVID-19 shutdowns and restrictions. The process resumed in September, when Bishop Brennan was the first in our Diocese to be fingerprinted by CSI. As of early November, fingerprinting in our Catholic schools is 75 percent complete, with the remainder expected to be completed by the end of the semester. The Vicar General, the Vicar for Clergy, the Chancellor, the Department of Catholic Schools staff, and staff in the Office of Safe Environment also have been fingerprinted. The majority of the diocese's priests will be fingerprinted during the Priests Convocation scheduled for May 2021. Plans to fingerprint the remaining groups will be formulated and carried out over the course of the coming year.

### Safe Environment audit/spot checks

The Diocese participates in a data collection audit every year and is audited on-site every three years by the USCCB's independent third-party auditing firm for compliance with Safe Environment protocol. Over the summer,

representatives from CSI worked with the Office of Safe Environment and the Department of Catholic schools to begin spot checks of schools and parishes to ensure compliance, accuracy, and consistency at the local level. CSI and the Diocese have been able to complete much of this work electronically, thanks to our software platforms. Since September, in conjunction with fingerprinting, CSI has been in our schools physically spot checking and auditing files to confirm the findings from the electronic reviews. As of early November, 75 percent of our schools have been audited/spot checked. Nearly all of the parishes also have been spot checked through our software platforms and files.

### Site Assessments

The Diocese has received requests from parishes and schools seeking guidance on how to better protect their people, buildings, and properties, and initially planned to engage in site assessments by CSI. CSI offers subject matter experts who can assess and evaluate site security and offer practical recommendations to enhance safety. However, as a result of budget restraints brought on by COVID-19, the Diocese will not be undertaking this particular effort going forward. Our parishes and schools will proceed with and adhere to their existing safety plans.

### Training

The Diocese, through CSI's experts, will offer training on safety, de-escalation, and harassment for professional staff. Our hope is that such instruction raises awareness and offers knowledge and effective tools to help navigate potentially difficult situations in our schools, parishes and Diocesan offices. More information will be shared on training opportunities in the coming year.

### EthicsPoint and Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting System



EthicsPoint has been up and running in the Diocese since August, and the Diocese now actively promotes the utilization of <https://reportbishopabuse.org>.

*\*Please note that the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston always encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The Diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities in addition to civil authorities.*

The Diocese has partnered with Navex Global and has rolled out a new version of its EthicsPoint platform, intended to report suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the diocese, parish, or Catholic school in West Virginia.

EthicsPoint can be accessed via the Diocesan web site under the “Accountability” tab, the “Report Misconduct” tab at the bottom of the page, or by calling (844) 723-8381. By utilizing EthicsPoint, employees, parishioners, volunteers, or other parties can report allegations or concerns on categories including fraud, abuse, and other professional misconduct in the workplace. Those

utilizing the reporting tool may do so anonymously, as EthicsPoint provides anonymity for those who wish to report and are concerned about retaliation or repercussions. This reporting system gives priests, religious, and laypeople a safe, honest channel for reporting and expressing concerns regarding members of the Church, including bishops. This system ensures that the voices of those who have concerns are heard, and the allegations are properly investigated. Reports are entered directly on the EthicsPoint secure server to prevent breaches in security. EthicsPoint makes reports available only to specific individuals within the administration of the Diocese who are charged with evaluating the report based on the nature of the violation and the location of the incident. Each report recipient has training in confidentiality and the investigatory process. An independent investigation company is also available to assist with investigations into reported activity. All reports are assigned case numbers, and names and contact information is not disclosed or searchable. This third-party web portal allows Diocesan staff to communicate back and forth with anonymous individuals who submit information.

In addition, on a national scale, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has its own third-party reporting system called the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service. This reporting system is established to receive reports of

sexual abuse and interference with sexual abuse investigations on the part of bishops in the U.S. These reports are relayed to a lay person in each diocese with professional experience in such matters, who assists the Metropolitan Archbishop in the investigation. Where a report indicates a crime, such as the sexual abuse of a minor, it is reported to civil authorities by the website's third-party vendor. The website to make such reports is <https://reportbishopabuse.org>.

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### **Why Is There An Office Of Safe Environment?**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The ***“Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”*** was adopted by the USCCB in June 2002 as a response to sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons, particularly from the time period of 1950 to 2002. The USCCB established an **Office of Child and Youth Protection** to oversee the application of the Charter's principles and to create the means for accountability for ensuring implementation of standards.

### **Reporting**

*The Diocese encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed.*

#### **To Report to Civil Authorities:**

Contact your local law enforcement; numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800-352-6513.

#### **To Report Abuse by a Bishop of the Catholic Church:**

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org) to report. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org).

#### **To the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston:**

The Diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost as well as to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by clergy, religious or lay personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact one of the Bishop's designees at 1-888-434-6237: Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Tim Bishop, ext. 353; Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens Jr., V.E., ext. 270; or please call the Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504.

You may also fill out a confidential “Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor.” The Complaint Form is available for download at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), click Offices, then Safe Environment and click the “Download Files and Forms” section. It is listed as “Complaint Form.”

To report to the Diocese's **Victim Assistance Coordinator** call Dr. Patricia M. Bailey: 304-242-6988

### **The Three Components of Compliance**

The Safe Environment Program by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston consists of the following three components:

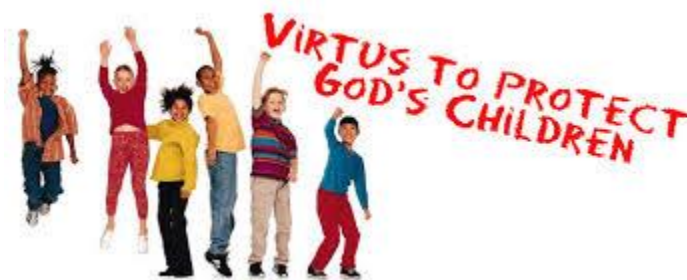
- ✓ Background Check
- ✓ Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children
- ✓ Awareness training for adults (VIRTUS online or live training)



All three components are mandated by the Diocese for persons seeking employment or seeking to volunteer directly or indirectly with children. A person is considered in compliance with the Diocese's Safe Environment Policy upon successful completion of all three components. Every year, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston - as well as all other dioceses in the United States - is audited by the USCCB for compliance with its "*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.*" The Diocese also convenes a lay-led Review Board that meets regularly to review all Safe Environment matters and ensure adherence to the Safe Environment process, including reporting to civil authorities.

### **Teaching Safety**

A Student Awareness Program has been implemented since the fall of 2005 to give children information (appropriate for their age levels) and skills to help recognize acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and how to effectively deal with those behaviors. This is a VIRTUS program called "**Teaching Safety**" (the program used to be called "Touching Safety" but was updated this past year). The program is taught in Catholic schools and as part of Parish Schools of Religion. This program offers lesson plans for children in grades Kindergarten through 12.



### **The "Teaching Safety" lesson cycle for this year is:**

School Year **2020-21** ... **Lesson ONE** and **Lesson TWO** ... Please note, under normal circumstances, Lesson One would be taught by the end of October and Lesson Two would be taught by the end of the school year. Because of COVID-19 considerations and restrictions, please teach both lessons at your earliest convenience to ensure that they are completed in the event of another shut down.

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## **Tips to stay safe from COVID-19 and seasonal flu:**



- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**
- Maintain social distance**
- Wear a mask**

**- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces**

**- Monitor your own health and check for symptoms daily**

