



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

• P.O. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003 •

Monday, August 3, 2020

DIOCESE DOUBLES ITS EFFORT TO PROVIDE THIRD-PARTY REPORTING OPTIONS

WHEELING, W.Va.—Expanding its commitment to addressing instances of abuse, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston now has two third-party reporting systems for concerns and allegations of abuse and harassment.

In West Virginia, the Diocese has partnered with Navex Global to roll 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.

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 will be relayed to a lay person in each diocese with professional experience in such matters, who will assist the Metropolitan Archbishop in the investigation. Where a report indicates a crime, such as the sexual abuse of a minor, it will also be reported to civil authorities by the website's third-party vendor. The website to make such reports is <https://reportbishopabuse.org>

These two reporting systems are both services in addition to the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment, which has offered a direct, discreet way to report sexual abuse within the Diocese.

The new platform used by the Diocese, an online or telephone reporting program called 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 will give 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.

“This new system offers an extra layer of accountability and gives anyone who may have been harmed a guarantee that their voices will be heard,” Bishop Mark Brennan said. “We know that it is important for people who come forward in good faith to be able to report anonymously. EthicsPoint allows for this.

“The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed,” the bishop said. He also encourages utilizing the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service to generate a report. Bishop Brennan encourages anyone with reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct to contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and also to visit <https://reportbishopabuse.org> to report.

Bishop Brennan added that there are already several measures within the Diocese to ensure the safety and protection of young people as well as accountability and transparency:

- The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston complies with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB’s) *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* by maintaining an Office of Safe Environment. Anyone who works or volunteers directly or indirectly with children in the Diocese is required to undergo a background check, completion of sex abuse awareness training, and receipt and review of the Diocese’s Sex Abuse Policy.
- The Diocese is audited annually through the USCCB to ensure adherence to the requirements and process. In the Fall, 2020, the Diocese plans to release audit related statistics for the current year.
- The Diocese also regularly convenes a Sexual Abuse Review Board comprised of lay members to ensure that the appropriate civil authorities are notified and the Safe Environment process is followed. In 2018, the Review Board was expanded to add expertise in law enforcement.
- Also in 2018, the Diocese publicly released its list of clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors, with the lay-led Review Board involved in the process.

“Like these previous steps, having two third-party reporting systems available shows the Diocese’s commitment to restoring trust with parishioners and the broader community in West Virginia,” Bishop Brennan said. “We are working diligently to grow a culture of safety within our parishes and schools, the Chancery, and the state of West Virginia as a whole.”

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. The proper extensions are listed below.

Sr. Ellen F. Dunn, O.P., ext. 264
Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263
Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353
Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens Jr., V.E., ext. 270

Or, please call:

The Office of Safe Environment: 304.230.1504

You may also fill out a confidential "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor" by picking one up at your local parish or requesting one in the mail from Safe Environment Coordinator, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, P.O. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003. The Complaint Form also is available for download on this web site by clicking on the "Download Files and Forms" section. It is listed as "Complaint Form."

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Media Contact

Tim Bishop
(304)233-0880, ext. 353 (office)