

***Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People***

**Self-Assessment Guide**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Purpose and Overview</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Article One</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Article Two</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Article Three</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Article Four</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Article Five</b>	<b>Pages 6- 7</b>
<b>Article Six</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Article Seven</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Article Twelve</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Article Thirteen</b>	<b>Page 8-9</b>
<b>Article Fourteen</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Article Fifteen</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Article Sixteen</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Article Seventeen</b>	<b>Page 10</b>

## Purpose and Overview

The Promise to Protect and Pledge to Heal are on-going commitments to the faithful for the bishops of the United States. It takes the concerted effort of all the people in our faith community to ensure that the children in the care of the Catholic Church are safe from harm. Catholic moral teaching makes it clear that children are to be protected from all harm. “The human body shares in the dignity of the image of God...” (CCC 364). It is this belief that compels us to protect that dignity not only because it is the right thing to do, but because of God’s love for us, it is what He calls us to do.

This resource has been prepared for dioceses and eparchies to assist them in assessing that the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* has been integrated into the fabric of the diocese/eparchy. It is encouraged that this tool be used in the years the diocese/eparchy is not participating in an on-site audit to make sure parishes and schools are accountable for all the requirements of the *Charter*.

This self assessment is not a requirement of the *Charter*. It is not part of the annual audit. It is intended as an internal document solely for the use of the diocese or eparchy. Dioceses and eparchies should feel free to change the format and/or questions to suit their individual needs.

## Self Assessment Guide

### Article One:

Dioceses/eparchies are to reach out to victims/survivors and their families and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being. The first obligation of the Church with regard to the victims is for healing and reconciliation. Each diocese/eparchy is to continue its outreach to every person who has been the victim of sexual abuse\* as a minor by anyone in church service, whether the abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past. This outreach may include provision of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services agreed upon by the victim and the diocese/eparchy.

Through pastoral outreach to victims and their families, the diocesan/eparchial bishop or his representative is to offer to meet with them, to listen with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns, and to share the “profound sense of solidarity and concern” expressed by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers (April 23, 2002).

Yes  No      Diocese/eparchy has an outreach program that offers healing and reconciliation for victims and their families.

Yes  No      Bishop offers to meet with the victims/families.

\*In accord with *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (SST), article 4 §1, sexual abuse, for purposes of this *Charter*, shall include any offense by a cleric against the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue with a minor as understood in the *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1395 §2 (“A cleric who in another way has committed an offense against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, if the delict was committed by force or threats or publicly or with a minor below the age of sixteen years [raised in SST to eighteen years which has been the age of majority for the USA since 1994], is to be punished with just penalties, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state if the case so warrants”) and the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, c. 1453 §1 (“A cleric who lives in concubinage or gives permanent scandal by publicly sinning against chastity is to be punished with a suspension, to which, other penalties can be gradually added up to deposition, if he persists in the offense”).

## Article Two:

Dioceses/eparchies are to have policies and procedures in place to respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred. Dioceses/eparchies are to have a competent person or persons to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report having been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel. The procedures for those making a complaint are to be readily available in printed form in the principle languages in which the liturgy is celebrated in the diocese/eparchy and be the subject of public announcements at least annually.

Dioceses/eparchies are also to have a review board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the bishop/eparch. The majority of its members are to be lay persons not in the employ of the diocese/eparchy (see Norm 5 in *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, 2006). This board is to advise the diocesan/eparchial bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of a cleric's suitability for ministry. It is regularly to review diocesan/eparchial policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors. Also, the board can review these matters both retrospectively and prospectively and give advice on all aspects of responses in connection with these cases.

- Yes  No    Diocese/eparchy has a written procedure on how they will respond to allegations of clergy sexual abuse.
- Yes  No    Diocese/eparchy has a Victim Assistance Coordinator.
- Yes  No    Diocese/eparchy has a Review Board which serves as a consultative body to the bishop.
- Yes  No    Procedures are written in all languages in which the liturgy is celebrated.

**Article Three:**

Dioceses/eparchies are not to enter into settlements which bind the parties to confidentiality unless the victim/survivor requests confidentiality and this request is noted in the text of the agreement.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy does not enter into confidentiality agreements without the request of the victim.

**Article Four:**

Dioceses/eparchies are to report an allegation of sexual abuse of a person who is a minor to the public authorities. Dioceses/eparchies are to comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities and cooperate in their investigation in accord with the law of the jurisdiction in question.

Dioceses/eparchies are to cooperate with public authorities about reporting cases even when the person is no longer a minor.

In every instance, dioceses/eparchies are to advise victims of their right to make a report to public authorities and support this right.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy reports all allegations of sexual abuse of minors to public authorities.

Yes  No Parishes report all allegations of sexual abuse to the diocese/eparchy.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy cooperates with public authorities on all matters of sexual abuse.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy advises victims of their right to make a report to public authorities.

## Article Five:

We affirm the words of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers: “There is no place in the priesthood or religious life for those who would harm the young.”

Sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric is a crime in the universal law of the Church (CIC, c. 1395 §2; CCEO, c. 1453 §1). Because of the seriousness of this matter, jurisdiction has been reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (*Motu proprio, Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, AAS, 93, 2001). Sexual abuse of a minor is also a crime in all civil jurisdictions in the United States.

Diocesan/eparchial policy is to provide that for even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor\*—whenever it occurred—which is admitted or established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon is to be permanently removed from ministry and, if warranted, dismissed from the clerical state. In keeping with the stated purpose of this *Charter*, an offending priest or deacon is to be offered therapeutic professional assistance both for the purpose of prevention and also for his own healing and well-being.

The diocesan/eparchial bishop is to exercise his power of governance, within the parameters of the universal law of the Church, to ensure that any priest or deacon subject to his governance who has committed even one act of sexual abuse of a minor \* (See Article One) shall not continue in ministry.

A priest or deacon who is accused of sexual abuse of a minor is to be accorded the presumption of innocence during the investigation of the allegation and all appropriate steps are to be taken to protect his reputation. He is to be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. If the allegation is not proven, every step possible is to be taken to restore his good name, should it have been harmed.

In fulfilling this article, dioceses/eparchies are to follow the requirements of the universal law of the Church and of the *Essential Norms* approved for the United States.

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a policy of conducting preliminary investigations.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a competent person who is responsible for conducting the preliminary investigation.
- Yes  No Parish personnel are aware of any diocesan priest that has been removed from ministry for *Charter*-related abuse.
- Yes  No Pastors follow diocesan/eparchial guidelines concerning allowing any visiting clerics performing any ministerial duties.

Yes  No Offending priests or deacons are removed from ministry after one act of sexual abuse has been established or admitted.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a policy and procedure for restoring the good name of a cleric if the accusation is deemed to be unfounded.

**Article Six:**

There are to be clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and volunteers of the church in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has written standards of behavior of clergy and church workers/volunteers who have contact with children.

**Article Seven:**

Dioceses/eparchies are to be open and transparent in communicating with the public about sexual abuse of minors by clergy within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved. This is especially so with regard to informing parish and other church communities directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving minors.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a written open and transparent communication policy about dealing with the public about the sexual abuse of minors.

Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has made sure that the parishes are familiar with the diocesan communication policy as well as know the name and contact information for the diocesan/eparchial Communications Director.

**Articles 8 through 11 are** not included in the audit process as they concern activities beyond the scope of the diocese/eparchy.

## Article Twelve:

Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain “safe environment” programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children.

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a safe environment training program for clerics.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a safe environment training program for employees.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a safe environment training program for volunteers who work with children.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a safe environment training program for children and young people.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a way of verifying the numbers of each group in
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a way of verifying the compliance with this article in every parish and school.

## Article Thirteen:

Dioceses/eparchies are to evaluate the background of all incardinated and non-incardinated priests and deacons who are engaged in ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese/eparchy and of all diocesan/eparchial and parish/school or other paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies. In addition, they are to employ adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination (cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation*, [Fifth Edition], 2006, no. 39).

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy evaluates the background of clerics.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy evaluates the background of employees.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy evaluates the background of volunteers who work with children.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a way of verifying the numbers of each group in every parish and school.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a way of verifying the compliance with this article in every parish and school.

**Article Fourteen:**

Transfers of clergy who have committed an act of sexual abuse against a minor for residence, including retirement, shall be as in accord with Norm 12 of the *Essential Norms*. (Cf. *Proposed Guidelines on the Transfer or Assignment of Clergy and Religious*, adopted by the USCCB, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious in 1993.)

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy does not transfer to another assignment a cleric who has committed an act of sexual abuse against a minor.
- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy has a monitoring system in place for any cleric who has committed an act of sexual abuse against a minor.

**Article Fifteen:**

To ensure continuing collaboration and mutuality of effort in the protection of children and young people on the part of the bishops and religious ordinaries, two representatives of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men are to serve as consultants to the Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People. At the invitation of the Major Superiors, the Committee will designate two of its members to consult with its counterpart at CMSM. Diocesan/eparchial bishops and major superiors of clerical institutes or their delegates are to meet periodically to coordinate their roles concerning the issue of allegations made against a cleric member of a religious institute ministering in a diocese/eparchy.

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy regularly communicates with the major superiors of religious orders represented in diocese/eparchy.

**Article Sixteen:**

Given the extent of the problem of the sexual abuse of minors in our society, we are willing to cooperate with other churches and ecclesial communities, other religious bodies, institutions of learning, and other interested organizations in conducting research in this area.

- Yes  No When given the opportunity, diocese/eparchy has cooperated with other institutions conducting research in regards to sexual abuse of minors in society.

**Article Seventeen:**

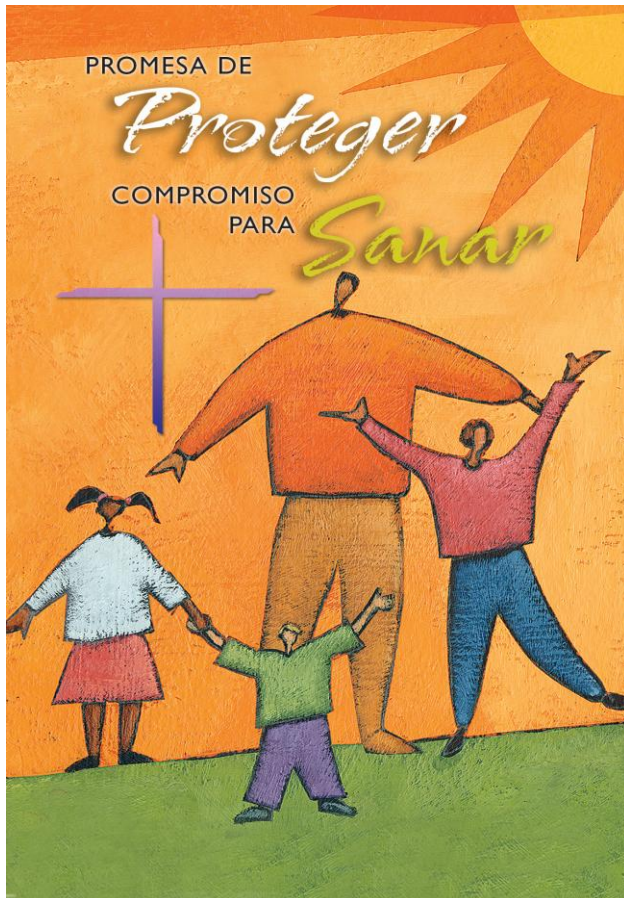
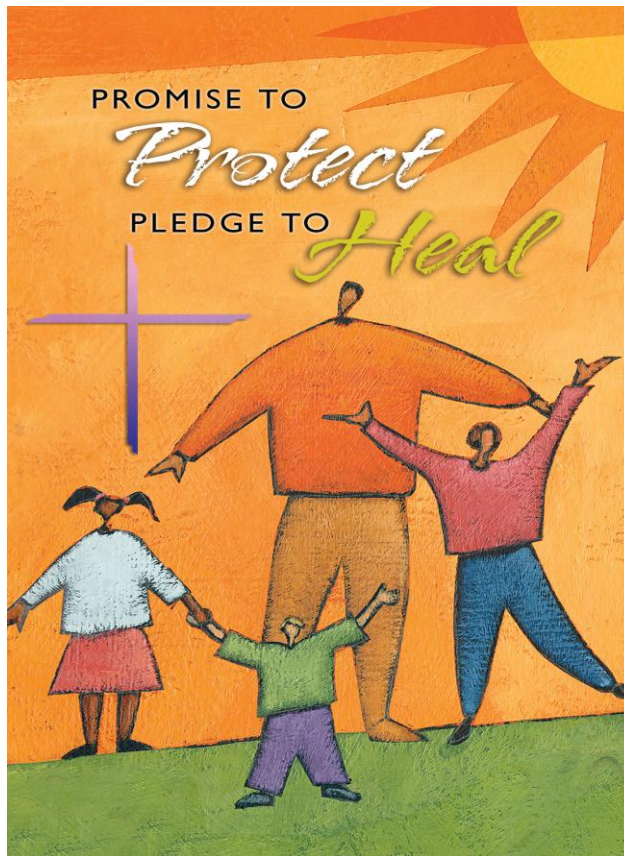
We pledge our complete cooperation with the Apostolic Visitation of our diocesan/eparchial seminaries and religious houses of formation recommended in the Interdicasterial Meeting with the Cardinals of the United States and the Conference Officers in April 2002.

We commit ourselves to work individually in our dioceses/eparchies and together as a Conference, through the appropriate committees, to strengthen our programs both for initial priestly formation and for the ongoing formation of priests. With new urgency, we will promote programs of human formation for chastity and celibacy for both seminarians and priests based upon the criteria found in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the *Program of Priestly Formation*, and the *Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*. We will continue to assist priests, deacons, and seminarians in living out their vocation in faithful and integral ways.

We bishops and eparchs commit ourselves to work as one with our brother priests and deacons to foster reconciliation among all people in our dioceses/eparchies, especially with those individuals who were themselves abused and the communities that have suffered because of the sexual abuse of minors that occurred in their midst.

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy sponsors or requires on-going formation of the priests.

- Yes  No Diocese/eparchy conducts healing, reconciliation, or outreach to those parishes and victims suffering because of sexual abuse.



## A PRAYER FOR HEALING Victims of Abuse

God of endless love,  
ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:  
You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,  
join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt  
in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize  
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## ORACIÓN PARA SANAR Victimas de Abuso

Dios de amor infinito,  
siempre bondadoso, siempre fuerte,  
siempre presente, siempre justo:  
Tú diste a tu único Hijo  
para salvarnos por la sangre de su cruz.

Jesús Bueno, pastor de paz,  
une a tu propio sufrimiento  
el dolor de todos quienes han sido heridos  
en cuerpo, mente y espíritu  
por aquellos quienes traicionaron  
la confianza puesta en ellos.

Oye nuestro llanto mientras sufrimos  
por el daño causado a nuestros hermanos y hermanas.  
Infunde sabiduría en nuestras oraciones,  
alivia nuestros corazones intranquilos con la esperanza,  
endereza los espíritus tambaleantes con fe:  
Muéstranos el camino hacia la justicia y la entereza,  
danos la luz de la verdad y cúbreonos con tu misericordia.

Espíritu Santo, consolador de corazones,  
cura las heridas de tu pueblo  
y rescátanos de nuestra dispersión.  
Danos valentía y sabiduría, humildad y gracia  
para que así actuemos con justicia  
y encontremos paz en ti.  
Te lo pedimos por Cristo, Nuestro Señor. Amén.