

# NEXT STEPS

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AWAKE MILWAUKEE FOR OUR ARCHDIOCESE

Sexual abuse is a persistent evil that cannot be eliminated from our Church with limited, one-time interventions. Instead, an effective response requires Catholics to undertake an ongoing journey down two paths. First, we must accompany and support victim-survivors in their pursuit of truth, accountability, and healing. Second, we must work proactively to prevent future abuse.

As committed Catholics, we believe that the duty of walking these two paths is not some abstract obligation that belongs to the narrow subset of church officials who are tasked with addressing the abuse crisis in their professional capacities. It is a concrete responsibility that falls on the shoulders of every member of the Body of Christ, for truly “if [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

In an effort to embrace this shared responsibility, Awake Milwaukee has developed a series of recommendations for next steps the Archdiocese of Milwaukee can take to build on the progress that has already been made. These recommendations emerge from our accompaniment with victim-survivors and reflect extensive research into the best practices already implemented by other Catholic dioceses in the United States.

We offer these next steps as an act of service to our Church, in a spirit of faith and hope.

## UPDATES TO LIST OF RESTRICTED PRIESTS

**Vision: We believe that transparency requires full disclosure of all priests who are credibly accused of sexual abuse and served within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, as well as clear communication when updates are made to the list of restricted priests.**

### Recommendations:

- 1) Add a section to the list of restricted priests on the AOM website that includes all priests from religious orders and from other dioceses who served within the geographical boundaries of the AOM and have been found to be credibly accused of sexual abuse by their diocese or religious order.
- 2) Place a heading on the website's [list of restricted priests](#) indicating the date and content of the most recent update to names, allegations, assignment history, documents, or any other content on this page.

### Justification:

- While the AOM's list of restricted priests includes extensive documentation on diocesan priests who are credibly accused of sexual abuse, the current list excludes many abusive clerics who have served in archdiocesan parishes, schools, and other ministries.
- Survivors of sexual abuse often make little distinction between diocesan, religious, and extern priests. Pastoral concern for these survivors necessitates a complete listing that includes religious order and extern priests.
- Given the large quantity of content on the AOM list of restricted priests, clear communication about any updates to this content is necessary to make the public aware of new information.

### Examples:

- Survivor-centered best practices have developed in recent years, and many dioceses in the United States now include religious order and extern priests on their lists of credibly accused priests. Among the 32 U.S. archdioceses, 22 include religious order or extern priests on their website lists of credibly accused priests. Many of these also include information about the most recent updates to their list.
- [The Archdiocese of Baltimore](#) includes both religious and extern priests on its list, with a brief description of the allegations received by the religious order or other diocese about each priest. The date of the most recent update is provided, and new information is indicated in italics.
- [The Archdiocese of Detroit](#) divides its list into categories, including "religious orders and other dioceses." The website explains that "the Archdiocese has decided to list these names [of religious and extern priests] in the interest of transparency and healing" and refers people to the respective religious orders, eparchies, and dioceses for more detailed information.
- [The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston](#) lists both religious order and extern priests and prefaces the list with a detailed description of the new information that was added in the most recent update.

## ADDRESSING SEXUAL ABUSE OF ADULTS

**Vision: We believe all people should be safe, protected, and supported in the Catholic Church, no matter their age.**

### Recommendations:

- 1) Acknowledge that adults can be victims of sexual abuse by church personnel by updating the Archdiocesan website and communications to use inclusive language that refers to “sexual abuse of minors and adults.”
- 2) Update the [Code of Ethical Standards for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee](#) to clearly define as sexual abuse any sexual contact between church personnel and an adult who is receiving counseling, sacramental preparation, spiritual guidance, or other ministerial care from that person.
- 3) Allow those who believe they have been the victim of sexual abuse as an adult access to the same reporting process and support services as those who have been victimized as children, available through the Victim Assistance Coordinator.

### Justification:

- Every human being is a child of God, worthy of safety, protection, and support. In the wake of the revelations about former cardinal Theodore McCarrick’s sexual abuse of adult seminarians, the Catholic Church is becoming more aware of the vulnerability of adults to sexual abuse by persons in positions of authority.
- Article 1 of Pope Francis’ 2019 Apostolic Letter [Vos Estis Lux Mundi](#) states that these new norms for addressing sexual abuse apply to “forcing someone, by violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts.”
- Recent updates to [Book VI of the Code of Canon Law](#) include a clarification of Canon 1398, which now explains that “the law recognises equal protection” to some adults who are the victims of sexual abuse. The norms of *Vos Estis* mentioned above define those who are granted equal protection. Archbishop Charles Scicluna, a senior official at the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, addressed these changes to canon law in a November 17, 2021 [address to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ General Assembly](#). He clarified that “sexual misconduct with vulnerable adults, for whom the law recognises equal protection under *Vos estis lux mundi*, is not reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith” but instead “the local bishop has to take care of these cases.” The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is thus responsible for responding to this directive.
- Dr. Kathleen McChesney, who established and led the USCCB’s Office of Child and Youth Protection beginning in 2002, [outlined the ongoing problem with abuse of adults](#) in a 2018 interview: “The church needs a broader view that would also focus on vulnerable adults, older persons, young adults who have been groomed by their perpetrators and persons who are in subordinate positions of power to the clergy—including seminarians.”

### Examples:

- Numerous dioceses around the United States have improved their policies to provide greater protection and support to those who have experienced abuse as adults.
- [The Diocese of Oakland, California](#)’s home page for survivor ministry states that “Clergy sexual abuse occurs when sexual activity of any kind is enacted by a priest or deacon, thereby abusing the power and authority of the pastoral role committed to the priest or deacon and violating the rights and dignity of the persons affected by such misconduct. The fundamental dynamic at the heart of clergy sexual abuse is that of an abuse of power. Anyone may potentially be victimized by clergy sexual abuse. This includes not only minors, but also young adults and adults, both male and female.”
- [The Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama](#) calls its safe environment department the “Office for the Protection of Minors and Adults,” and the [Diocese of Lansing, Michigan](#)’s FAQ’s note that “Adults may also report sexual harassment and sexual abuse to the Victim Assistance Coordinator.”
- [The Archdiocese of Louisville](#) defines any “sexual contact between Church personnel and an adult who is receiving counseling or other ministerial care from that priest, deacon, employee, seminarian, religious or volunteer” as “sexual exploitation.”

## PREVENTING ABUSE PROACTIVELY

**Vision: We believe the protection of God's children requires creating structures of accountability to interrupt behaviors that may set the stage for abuse.**

### Recommendations:

- 1) Craft a uniform definition of unacceptable boundary violations and incorporate the definition, with specific examples, into the [Code of Ethical Standards for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee](#).
- 2) Establish that church personnel are required to report instances in which they witness unacceptable boundary violations directly or *suspect* that unacceptable boundary violations might be occurring.
- 3) Use outside reporting agency Convercent to create the expectation of a parallel reporting process in which witnessed or suspected boundary violations are reported to an individual's supervisor and also through Convercent for tracking purposes.

### Justification:

- Psychological research demonstrates that child sexual abuse most often begins with an abuser's efforts to gain the trust of a potential victim. These behaviors involve the progressive violation of physical, emotional, social, and sexual boundaries. As such, boundary violations are often the first warning signs that children are at risk.
- Currently, training materials used in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee explain the grooming process and educate volunteers and workers about these warning signs of abuse. However, as the [independent review of the Archdiocese of Chicago's abuse-prevention practices](#) in 2019 noted, simply including information about boundary violations is not enough; there must be strictly enforced policies to clarify expectations, empower reporting, and cultivate accountability.
- According to the CDC's guidelines for "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations," reports of any concerning behavior involving youth should go through at least two lines within an organization's structure. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee's current Code of Ethical Standards encourages direct reporting of violations to "the supervisor or next higher authority." Using Convercent to implement a parallel reporting process incorporates the CDC's recommendations, creating the necessary tracking system to recognize problematic patterns before they escalate.

### Examples:

- Many dioceses in the United States have crafted policies that embody these best practices. They incorporate clear definitions of boundary violations, with specific examples, into their policies and codes of conduct; they establish a low threshold for the responsibility to report; and they clarify two lines of reporting responsibility.
- [The Archdiocese of Miami](#) describes "behaviors that raise serious concerns with respect to maintaining a safe environment" such as "failure to set appropriate limits with children" and "keeping secrets with children" in its "Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment for Children and Vulnerable Adults" document.
- [The Diocese of Fort Worth](#)'s "Code of Conduct and Behavior for All Clergy, Religious, and Lay Ministers" includes a clear list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, as well as early warning signs of an inappropriate relationship developing.
- [The Diocese of Spokane](#) delineates appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and outlines clear reporting responsibilities in its "Code of Conduct and Commitment" for clergy, staff, and volunteers.

# TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF LAY-LED ADVISORY BOARDS

**Vision: We believe transparency and accountability are essential for the effective functioning of consultative bodies like the [Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board \(FMOB\)](#) and [Community Advisory Board \(CAB\)](#).**

## Recommendations:

- 1) Publish on the archdiocesan website the FMOB's twice-annual reviews of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's compliance with Safe Environment and Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People requirements, as well as statistics about the number of cases reviewed by the FMOB and the numbers of these cases that resulted in removal from ministry, disciplinary measures, or other action.
- 2) Include on the AOM website a public commitment from Archbishop ListECKI to follow the recommendations of the FMOB regarding removal of a cleric from active ministry.
- 3) Appoint a lay spokesperson not employed by the Archdiocese for both Boards, list their contact information on the AOM website, and encourage the public to contact this spokesperson with questions or concerns.
- 4) Publish a twice-annual report from the CAB detailing the projects, improvements, and other work undertaken by that board, as well as what they have learned from listening to survivors.

## Justification:

- While the existence of two lay-led boards providing advice on sexual abuse and ministry suitability is a positive step, there are additional steps that could be taken to increase the transparency and accountability of these boards. Little information about their operations and initiatives is currently available to the public.
- The FMOB's regular review of AOM compliance with Safe Environment policies is an opportunity to reassure Catholics that action is being taken to provide a safe environment. Similarly, providing basic information about cases being reviewed by the FMOB (while maintaining legally required confidentiality) would increase confidence that concerns are being taken seriously.
- Archbishop ListECKI has publicly stated his commitment to follow the recommendations of the Diocesan Review Board regarding removal of a cleric from active ministry. If the Archbishop is similarly committed to following the recommendations of the FMOB, the faithful would benefit from a public communication of this pledge. If he is not able to make this commitment, communication about this fact would also be beneficial.
- One advantage of having qualified lay people leading these boards is the opportunity it gives for concerned Catholics to ask questions, offer suggestions, and raise concerns. Empowering a spokesperson for each board and making them easily accessible will increase confidence in the work of these boards and enhance the ability of these boards to listen directly to the faithful throughout the Archdiocese.
- The CAB is tasked with providing "input and feedback to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee on its policies, procedures, programs, response and outreach to survivors of clergy sexual abuse, their families, and others that have been deeply affected by clergy sexual abuse." Providing regular updates about this work will strengthen the community's understanding of the projects this body has undertaken, the improvements it has recommended, and its essential work of learning from victim-survivors.

## Examples:

- While the role and structure of lay-led advisory groups varies greatly among dioceses, the most effective of these boards include clear, consistent communication about their work.
- [The Archdiocese of Vancouver](#) publishes updates twice a year from its "Implementation Working Group" whose goal is to "review systems and policies so as to find opportunities for improvement in how victims/survivors are cared for and how abuse is reported." These reports provide an overview of progress made and objectives still in need of implementation.
- [The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis](#) commissioned a "Safe Environment and Ministerial Standards Task Force" to conduct a thorough review of archdiocesan policies, procedures and processes. The results of this review were made public in a 56-page report. Regular updates were provided about progress in six key areas of improvement.
- [The Diocese of Lansing, Michigan](#) uses a "Code of Conduct Advisory Council" to assess clerical misconduct, and the council's role and statutes are clearly outlined on the diocesan website.