



Diocesan Policy On Safe Environments

July 2023

(revised on November 21, 2023)

CONTEXT

In 2018, a diocesan policy to counter workplace harassment was adopted in the diocese and by each of its parish fabriques, but it is not well known. The structures in place need to be strengthened and training provided.

In 2021, a document entitled "*Managing an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor in an ecclesial context*" was published and the Archbishop's decree of May 1 renewed the *Advisory Committee for the management of allegations of sexual abuse of minors in an ecclesial context*. This process for managing allegations, although available online, is not widely known. The tools for its implementation need to be improved.

In 2022, a diocesan guide entitled "*For the cause of the little ones ... protecting minors and vulnerable people*" was drawn up for employees and volunteers working in parishes. A coordinator was hired in September 2022 to implement the guide. Much work remains to be done.

Also in 2022, a *Code of Ethics and Conduct* was published and is currently included in the document "*For the Cause of the Little Ones.*" It applies to all employees and volunteers in the diocese. Our safe environment coordinator has been presenting it in our parishes, and tools have been developed to promote it: a poster, an article in parish bulletins, and so on. A process still needs to be devised to deal with breaches of the code that do not fall under the heading of sexual abuse of minors or workplace harassment.

At this time, all these documents and their implementation are linked to each other by their common subject matter but are not well integrated into an overall perspective. Their dissemination and implementation are uneven.

In the archdiocese, we are beginning to receive reports of harassment in our parishes, whereas there are very few reports of abuse.

There is also growing public concern and expectation about the ethical behaviour of people in authority.

DECISION

Considering

- the benefit of having an integrated and holistic view of prevention and management of reported incidents in the diocese;
- the need for a unified and simple structure;
- the knowledge, awareness and expectations of all parishioners regarding ethical conduct;
- the need to revise policies to integrate best practices and comply with current legislation, both civil and canonical;
- the need for effective tools;
- the requirements of transparency and accountability;
- fair and prompt handling of reports;
- optimization of volunteer time;

I hereby confirm the proposal of the managers and members of the committees involved in these areas to establish the following management structure which will ensure the prevention and handling of reports of sexual abuse, workplace harassment and other forms of misconduct related to the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

I hereby reorganize the existing committees and working groups by establishing a *Diocesan Committee for Safe Environments* which will oversee a *Report Management Team* as well as the *Safe Environment Coordinator*.

The following organizational chart and related explanatory notes present the structure and roles of these elements, as well as the relationships between them.



1. COMMITTEE FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Membership:

- a lay chairperson (not employed by the diocese or parishes);
- the Archbishop (who may be replaced by the Vicar General if necessary);
- at least three members of the diocese appointed by the Archbishop, one of whom chairs the meetings of the Report Management Team.
- the safe environment coordinator who acts as secretary to this committee.

Mandate:

- Ensure that reference documents are revised and comply with legislative and regulatory requirements and emerging best practices.
- Ensure transparency in all communications with members of the diocese, its communities and movements, as well as the broader public.
- Ensure the application of diocesan policies and decrees on safe environments by accompanying the Report Management Team and the Safe Environment Coordinator.
- Receive reports from the Report Management Team and provide advice, opinions or recommendations on current issues.
- Identify and respond to its own training needs.
- Maintain the necessary links with the CCCB, the AÉCQ and any other relevant body.

The committee meets at least twice a year.

2. REPORT MANAGEMENT TEAM**Membership:**

- a member of the Committee for Responsible Ministry, who chairs the meetings and coordinates and facilitates them;
- the bishop's delegate responsible for the process for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse in an ecclesiastical context;
- the archdiocesan human resources technician, responsible for managing procedures regarding workplace harassment;
- the Vicar General, responsible for managing procedures regarding any other offence related to the archdiocesan *Code of Ethics and Conduct*;
- the bursar;
- the chancellor;
- a civil lawyer;
- one or two parishioners of the diocese.

If necessary, it can add members on an *ad hoc* basis to deal with specific cases.

Mandate:

- Receive training on established (current) procedures regarding disclosures.
- Propose revisions to policies and other documents as required.
- Develop the resources necessary for optimizing procedures regarding disclosures
- Ensure the dissemination of reference documents and procedures regarding disclosures;
- In accordance with established procedures, receive and process complaints relating to allegations
 - of sexual abuse,
 - of workplace harassment
 - of other misconduct related to the Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- Identify the procedures for archiving reports, analyses and recommendations made for each complaint.

The committee meets according to the needs of its mandate or each time a report is received.

3. SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATOR

The Safe Environment Coordinator is named by the Archbishop.

Mandate:

- Ensure the ongoing implementation of *“For the Sake of the Little Ones... Protect Minors and Vulnerable Adults”* in parish environments.
- Prepare training workshops according to the needs expressed and the objectives pursued, for employees, volunteers, priests and committees.
- Work with parish respondents to identify needs and ensure the relevance of tools for implementing safeguarding measures.
- Propose revisions to *“For the Sake of the Little Ones”* to include parish responsibilities for compliance with the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*.
- Consider the possibility of setting up an advisory committee for implementation; convene it when necessary and chair it.

4. The Archbishop's Office

Because of the structures of canon and civil law, the archbishop bears ultimate responsibility for the safety of the environment and the sound management of reports. However, he cannot carry out this responsibility in isolation; he needs other members of the diocese who, each according to his or her skills, make an indispensable contribution in this area. The Archbishop works in collaboration with the Diocesan Committee for Safe Environments, the Report Management Team and the Safe Environments Coordinator in a spirit of solidarity, transparency and shared responsibility.

While the bishop himself is instrumental in creating within his diocese or eparchy a culture of safety, he exercises this ministry in cooperation with others by respecting secular laws and civil authorities and by virtue of his communion with the universal Church, his fellow bishops, and the faithful entrusted to his pastoral care. (CCCB, *Protection minors from Sexual Abuse*, p. 65)

Paul-André Durocher, Archbishop of Gatineau

July 18, 2023