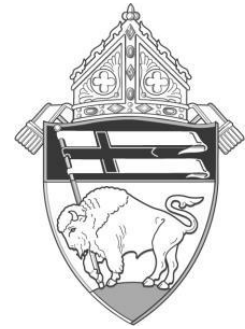

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2, 2021

Independent Audit Determines Diocese in Full Compliance With Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

(Buffalo, NY) – The independent Rochester auditing firm of StoneBridge Business Partners has conducted a thorough audit of the policies and protocols of the Diocese of Buffalo with regard to training, reporting and ensuring safe environments for young people according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ mandated *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and found the Diocese to be in full compliance. The audit covers the period of 2019 to 2020.

“This independent verification that the policies and procedures of the Diocese of Buffalo to ensure that our children are safe, that rigorous training is being conducted and reliable reporting mechanisms are in place should provide confidence and peace of mind to parents, families and our entire community,” said newly-installed Bishop Michael Fisher. “We will continue to assess what more we can do to provide utmost assurance that the Diocese has zero-tolerance for any conduct by a bishop, priest, deacon, lay employee or volunteer that is not in keeping with both the spirit and letter of the Charter to protect young people. This also includes ensuring appropriate conduct by, and toward, adults.”

The “Charter” is divided into 17 articles and begins with a review of efforts to provide healing for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. It continues by evaluating processes in place to ensure that a safe environment is provided for all youth and vulnerable adults now and in the future.

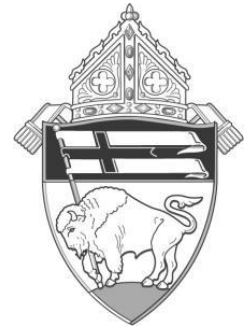
To meet the requirements, the audit begins with extensive data collection from schools, parishes and key departments within the diocese. Hundreds of pages of documentation is compiled, consisting of procedures for working with victims-survivors of abuse; the proper training for seminarians, priests and deacons, as well as effective hiring practices for employees and volunteers. In all cases, applicant screening, training and proper hiring practices are emphasized, including initial and recurring criminal background checks.

Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator, Don Blowey, emphasizes that much has changed over the almost 18 years he has been working to coordinate child protection efforts. “Making sure that we only attract and hire healthy and responsible women and men who embrace our child safety efforts is our highest priority,” said Mr. Blowey.

(continued)

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



“Much has been done to train adults in how to be aware of victim-grooming and when it’s appropriate to report any concerns or violations to civil and diocesan authorities.” The Safe Environment Office has trained over 40,000 adults since 2003, and conducts age-appropriate training in schools and parish programs.

Extensive data is provided to auditors so that when the in-person interviews occur, the auditors are in a position to ask specific questions of parish, school and diocesan leaders in order to verify that rigorous procedures are in place to protect children and vulnerable persons. The in-person interviews include pastors, principals, the leadership team for priestly and diaconal formation, as well as the Victim Assistance Coordinator, and the members of the Independent Review Board, which reviews allegations against clergy, diocesan employees and volunteers.

It typically takes many months to collect all of the relevant data that is provided to auditors in advance of scheduled interviews with diocesan personnel. This year, there were 20 interviews conducted, some involving interviews with more than one person at a time. The final interview was conducted with then-Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger.

For a full overview of the Diocese of Buffalo’s policies and protocols concerning Safe Environments, as well as reporting procedures, go to: <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/protection>

- To report sexual abuse by a member of clergy, an employee or volunteer of the Catholic church, contact the civil authorities and Jacqueline Joy, Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Diocese of Buffalo
Hotline: (716) 895-3010 email: jacqueline.joy@ccwny.org
- Independent Third-Party Reporting can be made through EthicsPoint:
Visit the website: www.buffalodiocese.ethicspoint.com
Hotline: (844) 573-4177
- To report sexual misconduct by a bishop or eparch, contact the national reporting website or reporting hotline: Visit the website: www.ReportBishopAbuse.org
Hotline: (800) 276-1562

+++