

## **Child Protection Accountability – Best Practices**

VOTF was founded following the clergy sexual abuse scandal which received national attention in 2002 because of the revelations that bishops transferred priest perpetrators rather than remove them from ministry. Faithful Catholics quickly realized that as horrible as the crime of sexual abuse is, it is not enough to only tend to the victims of clergy sexual abuse but critical to prevent children from the possibility of abuse in the future. In fact, this is one of the most frequently stated desires of survivors – to make sure that the abuse they endured would not be repeated. To accomplish this many dioceses have instituted policies and procedures to ensure a safe environment for children.

### **VOTF Principles Regarding Child Protection**

The following are foundational for preventing sexual abuse.

1. Vigorous communication with the Faithful about how to report child abuse (through websites, newspapers, the pulpit, education, and a diocesan victim assistance coordinator and organization),
2. Listing of which diocesan personnel have been credibly accused (open records), and
3. Training to help all those in contact with children recognize potential dangers (programs such as Virtus).

### **VOTF Best Practices of Child Protection Accountability**

1. Easily found diocesan website information which includes:
  - A. Current list of credibly accused diocesan personnel, their location, history, and current status.
  - B. Name and contact information for the victim assistance coordinator
2. Diocesan newspaper coverage announcing whenever diocesan personnel are credibly accused of sexual abuse including a listing of past assignments.
3. Public pastoral statements directly from the bishop acknowledging the event(s) and the wrongdoing (or something like this SCG).
4. Meaningful, welcoming survivor support process
5. Readily available and approachable victim assistance coordinator and/or organization that is well publicized.
6. Diocesan Review Board which evaluates accusations of sexual abuse by clergy or church personnel. The Review Board should be:
  - A. Independent of the Bishop
  - B. Comprised of both lay men and women and clerics with backgrounds making them competent to assess sexual abuse allegations
  - C. Names of the Review Board should be public
7. Full implementation of a child safety program

8. Full compliance with the Dallas Charter for Protection of Children and Youth
9. Current list of credibly abused diocesan personnel easily available from the chancery upon request (including name, ministry history, current location, and ministry status).

For further information see: [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org) and click on Protecting Our Children.