



# ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

## MOVING FORWARD IN FAITH:

Renewing Our Commitment to Child Protection, Victim Assistance, and Priestly Integrity

Bulletin No. 4

June 2011

### Introduction

This is the fourth in a series of periodic bulletin inserts developed by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to provide information to parishioners. Each bulletin will focus on action steps the Archdiocese has taken to advance the protection of children, assist victims, and ensure the integrity of the priesthood.

### Child Protective Services Law (CPSL)

- The Pennsylvania CPSL defines mandated reporters as persons who, as a result of their employment, occupation or profession, come into regular contact with a child and thus are legally responsible to report suspected child abuse.
- Persons required to report include, but are not limited to, any licensed physician, medical examiner, coroner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, member of the clergy, school administrator, school teacher, school nurse, social services worker, or any other child-care or foster-care worker, mental health professional, peace officer or law enforcement official.
- The CPSL requires the reporting of suspected child abuse by mandated reporters to the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare's **ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313**.
- The law defines child abuse as any of the following involving a child under the age of eighteen:
  - Any recent act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious physical injury;
  - An act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious mental injury or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation;
  - Any recent act, failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act which create an imminent risk of serious physical injury, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation;
  - Serious physical neglect constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide the essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs a child's functioning.
- The CPSL allows reports of suspected child abuse to occur in one of two ways:
  - the mandated reporter calls ChildLine directly or;
  - the organization or agency where the mandated reporter works can identify a specific person to be the party legally responsible to make the report.
- The law requires that mandated reporters provide their contact information. The law, however, protects the identity of mandated reporters.
- Mandated reporters who act in good faith are afforded civil and criminal immunity.
- Failure to fulfill the legal obligation to report suspected abuse can result in the arrest and prosecution of the mandated reporter.

### Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

- Creating a network for the protection of children and the prevention of child abuse is a shared community responsibility involving every member of the Church – each of us has a role to play.
- For some members of our church community, however, there is a greater expectation about their role in reporting suspected child abuse to ChildLine, Pennsylvania's toll-free child abuse hotline. These persons, under Pennsylvania law, are known as mandated reporters.
- Statistics illustrate how important mandated reporters are to the protection of children. Last year, mandated reporters in Pennsylvania reported 18,972 cases of suspected child abuse. This figure represents approximately 77 percent of all reports made to ChildLine.
- Pennsylvania law does not require that mandated reporters be trained in their role and responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Archdiocese recognizes that quality training is among the tools mandated reporters need to fulfill their duty in protecting children, ensuring children are safe, and that needed interventions are made.

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- In 2011, the Protect Our Children Committee ([www.protectpachildren.org](http://www.protectpachildren.org)), Pennsylvania's leading statewide coalition dedicated to preventing child abuse and achieving child welfare reforms, released the findings of a survey completed by more than 1,200 mandated reporters. That survey revealed that 14 percent of the responding mandated reporters had never been trained and another 24 percent were trained prior to significant changes made to state law and enacted in 2006.

### **Archdiocesan Policy**

- Archdiocesan policy states that mandated reporters are all clergy, as well as all employees, parish and school staff who come into regular contact with children.
- The Archdiocese recognizes the important role volunteers play in the care, instruction, and protection of our children. It considers CYO coaches, catechists and other volunteers coming into regular contact with a child as mandatory reporters.
- Regular contact with children is defined by the Archdiocese as contact that occurs during the course of ministry and paid or volunteer work at least once per week.
- Archdiocesan policy directs all reporters, whether mandated by law or obligated by Archdiocesan Policy, to resolve any doubt in favor of a report.
- Archdiocesan policy requires that clergy, staff and volunteers who suspect child abuse must immediately notify the person in charge (e.g., pastor, principal, director of religious education, administrator).
- The person in charge must immediately make the report to:
  - Pennsylvania Department of Welfare's ChildLine at 1-800-932-0303.
  - The Archdiocesan Office for Child and Youth Protection at 1-888-800-8780.
- Nothing precludes the initial mandated reporter from also calling ChildLine.

### **Office for Child and Youth Protection – New Mandatory Reporter Training Program**

- Recognizing the essential role mandated reporters play in creating a network of prevention and protection for children in the care of the Archdiocese, a new Mandatory Reporter Training Program has been initiated by the Office for Child and Youth Protection. This training program is in addition to, as well as separate and distinct from, the Safe Environment Training already required for all clergy, staff and volunteers working on behalf of the Archdiocese.
- From June through November 2011, a series of 90 trainings will be conducted. Over 24,000 clergy, staff and volunteers will attend these trainings. Employees will attend a three-hour training and volunteers will attend a one-hour training.
- The training is designed to provide all clergy, staff and volunteers who are mandated reporters with an effective and proven training intended to:
  - Identify the signs and symptoms of child abuse;
  - Offer effective means to respond to children who discloses they have been abused and to minimize the trauma a child experiences;
  - Foster an understanding of and comfort level with the required steps, under state law and Archdiocesan policy, so that suspected child abuse is properly reported.
- The Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) in Bucks County ([www.novabucks.org](http://www.novabucks.org)) will conduct the new training titled *Mandated Reporter Training: Knowing Your Role in the Protection of Our Children*.
- NOVA's training has been well received across the Commonwealth and meets standards set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Child Development and Early Learning.
- Independent evaluations have shown that participants rate this training "very highly" and state that they are better prepared to be able to identify the signs and indicators of all types of abuse as well as to make a report to authorities.

*All clergy, Archdiocesan employees and volunteers must register for the new Mandatory Reporter Training Program by going to <http://bit.ly/AOPMandatoryReporterTraining>. They are encouraged to register as soon as possible to obtain the training date of their choice. Training for all school personnel will be conducted separately during the last week in October 2011.*