



## **Diocese of Saint Augustine Communications Plan**

### *Implementation of Charter for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults*

#### **Mission Statement**

The communications plan for *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* reflects a commitment by the Diocese of Saint Augustine to provide information on how the charter has and will be implemented. This plan exhibits the diocese's commitment to promote the charter to deal as openly as possible with members of the North Florida community. This includes clergy, alleged victims and families, law enforcement, the Catholic community and public at-large, and the media in cases of alleged sexual abuse by clergy or church personnel.

This plan provides information and direction for communications.

#### **Promoting Policy**

- 1) Promote the existence of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Policy Procedural Guidelines Relating To Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults* for the Diocese of Saint Augustine through the diocesan media, including newspapers (English/Spanish), radio (English/Spanish) and television stations.
- 2) Use the diocesan website to provide instant access to the charter and diocesan policies and victims' assistance coordinator information, including where to report abuse.
- 3) Use weekly official electronic newsletter, *Pastoral Briefings*, to 60 parishes, missions, school administrators and diocesan leadership for current information and to direct pastors, parishioners and the public to the official diocesan website for charter/policy information.
- 4) Promote through secular media via news releases, interviews, press conferences, media briefings, etc.
- 5) Use diocesan and secular media as avenues of reaching out to victims and to encourage those who have been abused to come forward.

- 6) Meet with editorial staff of newspapers and broadcast outlets to familiarize each with the charter, how it works in the diocese and answer any questions they may have.
- 7) Provide spokesperson for media interviews/talk shows regarding this issue.

### **Notification of Allegations**

All communications regarding allegations of child sexual abuse will protect the identity of the victim and reflect the confidential nature of the investigation. Care will be taken to insure the rights of the alleged perpetrator are not violated.

### **Internal Communications**

- 1) Notification to parishes, schools, clergy, religious, lay employees and volunteers will be made through statements/news releases provided by the Bishop or his representative. These will be made available as soon as feasible.
- 2) All efforts will be made to have diocesan media “break” the story, allowing accurate and timely information communicated to our clergy, parishioners and other communities.
- 3) Any employee found guilty of child sexual abuse will have this information noted in his or her personnel file. Inquiries for references in cases of guilty employees will be referred to the Office of Human Resources.

### **External Communications**

- 1) All media inquiries will be answered by the spokesperson designated by the Bishop. No other diocesan employee or volunteer is to respond to media inquiries except when so directed by the Bishop or his representative.
- 2) Every effort will be made to insure that all information is disseminated in a timely and appropriate manner. To that end, media releases will be made to appropriate bodies as advisable.
- 3) Respond to media inquiries with openness without jeopardizing aspects of the legal investigation/litigation or breaching elements of confidentiality for either alleged victim or abuser.