

Archdiocese, Review Board release 2018 reports on child and youth protection

More than 30,000 adults and 39,000 children received safe environment training in the 2018 fiscal year, according to the annual child protection report from the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

During that same period, employees and volunteers were screened for fitness to work with minors. Nearly 3,900 clergy, religious and employees were cleared after submitting to a criminal history screening, as well as nearly 27,000 volunteers.

This is the second year the archdiocese has released a report on child protection efforts. The 2017 report was released jointly by the Office of Child and Youth Protection and the Independent Review Board, which assists the archdiocese with child protection efforts. This year, the OCYP and IRB issued separate reports for the 12-month period ending June 30, 2018.

The **OCYP report** noted that the archdiocese “strictly complies with Maryland laws requiring the reporting of suspected child abuse to civil authorities. Under Maryland law, any person who has reason to believe a child has been subjected to abuse must report the suspected abuse to civil authorities, even if the potential victim is now an adult and even if the alleged perpetrator is deceased.”

The report notes that archdiocesan policy requires that if someone associated with the church – including clergy, employee or volunteer – is suspected of committing abuse, the suspected abuse must also be reported to the archdiocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection. The report enumerated allegations from reporting year 2018:

- One clergy member (Father Luigi Esposito) who was then-serving in the Archdiocese of Baltimore was accused of child sexual abuse that occurred in the 1970s. In that case, all allegations were reported to civil authorities in

accordance with Maryland child abuse reporting laws, and the archdiocese cooperated with civil authorities. The accused priest was permanently removed from ministry. A public announcement was made and a meeting was held for all adult members of the parish where the priest was serving at the time of his removal from ministry.

- Ten clergy, who were either deceased or already permanently removed from priestly ministry due to prior allegations, were accused of child sexual abuse, based on events that occurred many years earlier, according to the report. In all cases, reports were made to civil authorities in accordance with Maryland child abuse reporting laws, and the archdiocese cooperated with civil authorities.
- Three lay volunteers or employees who were then serving in the archdiocese were accused of possible child sexual abuse and reported to civil authorities. One allegation was ruled out by the Department of Social Services. Two individuals had their service terminated because of the allegations.

The **IRB's report** noted, "The IRB reviewed 22 individual matters, including reports involving 11 priests and 11 lay employees or volunteers. Twelve of the matters were brought to the board for the first time and 10 of the matters were updates on individuals previously presented to the board. ... The IRB was informed that every allegation of child sexual abuse was reported to law enforcement and counseling assistance was offered to every victim."

Bishop Adam J. Parker, vicar general and moderator of the curia and a member of the archdiocesan child protection team, said it is important to note that the reports from the OCYP and the IRB were separate this year.

The OCYP report presents an overall accounting of that office's work over the year in question.

"That is a report of the types of allegations that were received and reviewed by the office over the course of the year. It also includes some financial information what was paid out for counseling and also settlements during the course of the year," he said. "It also includes some policy updates that occur during the course of the year."

The report from the IRB details some of the discussions and conversations in which

the Independent Review Board engaged for the fiscal year.

"If we (the archbishop and his staff) are making a decision, for example, about a priest's suitability for ministry based on an allegation that has been received, if we make a decision that a priest is being permanently removed from ministry because of an allegation received, all of those kinds of things, those decisions are reviewed by the Independent Review Board," Bishop Parker said.

Iona Rudisill, a member of the Review Board, said the OCYP report detailed the policies the archdiocese put into place and the types of work it did. It was important for the IRB to issue its own report to highlight that the Review Board is independent from the archdiocese. "We work together as a partnership, but we are separate," she said.

The IRB is made up of Catholics and non-Catholics, those who have had children in Catholic schools and those who haven't, said Rudisill, who is not Catholic, but whose stepdaughter attended a Catholic school for four years and whose son attended a Catholic school for one year.

She has worked in the field of child abuse for more than 25 years, presently at the Baltimore Child Abuse Center as program manager. She has been a forensic interviewer, especially for child abuse cases, for 16 years. She brings to the board a perspective as a parent and a professional.

She said Archbishop William E. Lori and other archdiocesan staff attend the IRB meetings and that they listen to the board's recommendations and act on them. "I do believe that they take the time to act upon them," she said.

She noted that Archbishop Lori and Baltimore's auxiliary bishops wanted to have a policy and procedure to hold bishops accountable for misconduct or for neglecting or mishandling reports of misconduct brought to their attention, despite the U.S. bishops not voting on such measures in November 2018. They were able to create a policy, implemented in January, developed from the IRB's suggestion.

Pope Francis **released May 9 new law** for the church that includes episcopal accountability very similar to the policy implemented in Baltimore and other norms

to be implemented worldwide by the church. The Archdiocese of Baltimore **already complies** with almost all of the requirements set out by the new norms from the Vatican.

When Rudisill joined the board a little over a year ago, it was set to meet quarterly. Recently, the group has been meeting monthly. In addition to reviewing policies and recommending improvements, the board reviews allegations of child sexual abuse as well as cases where archdiocesan policies may have been violated.

Any type of allegations of sexual abuse involving a child are reported to the local jurisdiction of Child Protective Services and local law enforcement.

“They also have increased their screening of the staff members that are coming in ... when they’re going through their seminary and they’re receiving their training – how to value the child and look at the child and the worth of the child and how they are to engage with that child in an appropriate manner.”

She added that the archdiocese is “doing its due diligence to make sure that they are putting people in the priesthood and in these positions who really have the idea of protecting the child, as opposed to misusing the vulnerability and abusing children.

“They are looking at it more stringently and they’re looking at it more creatively” and informing parishioners, parents and the community at large.

Rudisill said the IRB’s role is vital, and that it needs to partner with the archdiocese to assist in the efforts to protect children.

As someone who works in children’s advocacy centers, she believes every organization that works with youths should have some type of outside entity or independent board to review its efforts.

“Child abuse has always been there. Child sex abuse has always been evident. But we are pushing to end it, and we’re pushing to bring restorative healing to those who have experienced it and perhaps didn’t get what they need back when it was occurring, and to prevent it,” she said.

The Office of Child and Youth Protection’s report noted that in fiscal year 2018, the

archdiocese paid \$244,233 to provide counseling, therapy and other necessary medical costs for 64 survivors of child sexual abuse or their family members. It paid \$458,250 in settlements with survivors of child sexual abuse, including seven voluntary settlements through its mediation program for time-barred claims, where all of the incidents occurred more than 30 years ago, and one settlement where the incident with a lay teacher occurred in 2017.

In the same period, the archdiocese spent nearly \$391,000 for its centralized child protection efforts, including salaries and expenses, training programs and background checks that serve the archdiocese's parishes, schools, clergy, employees, and volunteers.

Included in that were 28 training sessions for screening coordinators at local parishes and schools.

Salaries, expenses and training programs of the OCYP are part of the central budget of the archdiocese, supported by the cathedraticum paid by archdiocesan parishes. Background checks are paid through the archdiocese's insurance program.

For more information on the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Child Protection efforts, visit <https://www.archbalt.org/accountability/>.

*Read the OCYP and IRB reports **here**.*

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