



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Diocese Outlines Continuing Efforts to Help Victims and Survivors of Sexual Abuse

(HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA) – For almost two decades, the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown has been committed to providing pastoral care and financial support to the victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

The diocese began a Victim Assistance Program in 1999, and, since that time, assistance in the form of compensation and counseling has been provided to nearly 300 individuals. The diocese has offered more than \$2.8 million for victim counseling.

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown will continue to assist victims and survivors of sexual abuse. These measures are supported by:

- An Independent Help Line listed on the diocesan website.
- A Diocesan Review Board whose membership was completely changed in 2017 and now includes members from outside of the Catholic faith.
- A Victim Assistance Coordinator who functions independently of the Diocesan Review Board.
- An Independent Oversight Board that continues to review and evaluate all policies and procedures for the diocesan Youth Protection Program. With the exception of one member, who is a survivor of child sexual abuse, all members of the Independent Oversight Board are from outside the diocese.
- A newly-created Youth Protection Office with a full time director who oversees youth protection awareness training and mandated reporting training efforts that include recognizing, responding to, and reporting suspected child sexual abuse. The director's efforts are monitored by the Independent Oversight Board.
- Continued reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse to law enforcement and continued cooperation with authorities – including any investigations.
- Continued cooperation with social service agencies throughout the eight counties of the diocese, as well as continued cooperation on the state level through the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR).

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown plans to release a more complete financial and statistical summary involving clergy sexual abuse. That report will be available in the near future.