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Diocese of Buffalo

# Office of Communications



March 1, 2018

## Diocese announces Compensation Program for victims of sexual abuse

Bishop Richard J. Malone has announced the establishment of a voluntary Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP) for those who have made claims that they were sexually abused as a child by a member of the clergy in the Diocese of Buffalo. Individuals who have previously made claims will be contacted and invited to participate in this voluntary program offering monetary settlements.

“I know this is the right thing to do,” said Bishop Malone. “The victims and our Church in Western New York cannot move forward until the pain of the past is properly addressed. Over the past year, several other dioceses have launched similar programs and it was well-received and appreciated by many of those victims as a form of healing. We pray that this monetary compensation together with the acknowledgment that they were hurt can be a significant step in helping them to heal. If we can help victims to heal, then we as a Church can begin to heal from this awful part of our past.”

The program will be administered by former New York State Supreme Court Justice Jerome Gorski and former New York State Supreme Court Justice and former Surrogate Judge Barbara Howe. Justice Gorski (ret.) is an arbitrator and mediator with National Arbitration and Mediation. Justice Howe (ret.) is Senior Counsel to the law firm Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP. The administrators will determine the appropriate compensation to be offered each claimant whose claim is accepted. The claimant will have 60 days to accept or reject the settlement. The Diocese does not have the authority to modify or reject any individual claim determination made by the administrators.

“This program is a next step to continue the Diocese’s ongoing commitment to protect children and help victims. In many cases, the Diocese has provided a pastoral response, counseling and other assistance as needed to victims,” said Terrence M. Connors, of Connors LLP. “The Diocese of Buffalo prepared a written policy in 1990 to address the issue. This policy was distributed to all Diocesan clergy twelve years before the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a revised Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002 to ensure the Church’s vigilance in guarding against violations of trust.”

Since 2003, the Diocese has been conducting mandatory training and a system of background checks for all who regularly interact with young people. Using a program called Virtus , [www.Virtus.org](http://www.Virtus.org) , entitled ‘Protecting God’s Children’, every cleric, church employee and volunteer initially goes through hours of training, and then, every month, they are also required to read additional training materials and answer questions pertaining to new trends in the way predators are targeting young victims.

Diocesan clergy, employees and volunteers are not only trained to identify signs of sexual abuse, but are also required to report suspected abuse to the Victim Assistance Coordinator and to the District Attorney's office as well. In the Diocese of Buffalo, Victim Assistance Coordinator, Jacqueline Joy, is experienced in trauma therapy. She facilitates diocesan assistance for victims and their families. In this regard, the Catholic Church has a proactive policy and will continue to protect the rights of all people, with a special concern for the vulnerable.

This new IRCP will be paid from self-insurance liability and investment fund reserves. The donations made to the recently completed *Upon This Rock* campaign or the ongoing *Catholic Charities* campaign will not be used for this program. For more information on the Diocese of Buffalo Independent Reconciliation Program, visit [www.buffalodiocese.org/ircp](http://www.buffalodiocese.org/ircp)

Thanks for your consideration,  
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