



Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Communications

3424 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010 | phone: (213) 637-7215 | fax: (213) 637-6215 | Communications@la-archdiocese.org

A Brief Overview of Archdiocesan Programs and Actions for the Protection of Children and Young People

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is committed to providing a safe environment for young people in our schools, parishes and other ministries.

Since the early 2000s and even before that, the Archdiocese has had in place a system for reporting and investigating suspected abuse by priests and for removing offenders from ministry. We have also established an extensive program of education and background checks to make sure our children are safe and cared for.

Many of our programs and policies were initiated under the leadership of Cardinal Roger M. Mahony, who served as Archbishop of Los Angeles from 1985 to 2011 and is now retired.

During his time as Archbishop, Cardinal Mahony was confronted with the allegations of abuse by clergy that spanned a timeframe of over seventy years. The majority of these cases involved abuses that allegedly occurred before he became Archbishop of Los Angeles in 1985. However, he took responsibility for failures and mistakes in the way abuse cases were handled in the past and issued apologies to victims and to the people of the Archdiocese. He also instituted a strict “zero tolerance” policy to ensure that future allegations would be reported to authorities and that anyone found to have committed abuse — whether a priest, deacon, religious or lay person — would be held accountable and permanently removed from ministry in the Archdiocese.

In 2004, he directed the publication of the “Report to the People of God,” the first time a U.S. diocese had issued a comprehensive listing of all clergy to have been publicly or credibly accused of abuse from 1930–2003. Files of clergy with credible abuse claims against them were made public in 2013, as part of a global settlement the Archdiocese reached with victim-survivors of abuse in 2007.

Over the years, Cardinal Mahony met with many victims personally and apologized to them. He established the [Office of Victim’s Assistance Ministry](#) so that victim-survivors would have an advocate in the Archdiocese. This vital ministry continues to provide support for victim-survivors and their families and is also reports abuse to the authorities.

In addition, he established the [Clergy Misconduct Oversight Board](#) (CMOB) that is comprised primarily of lay people, including a victim-survivor of abuse by clergy. CMOB reviews the investigations of reported misconduct by clergy that is carried out by retired FBI agents retained by the Archdiocese and recommends an appropriate course of action.

The Archdiocese follows [a strict process when reports of abuse are made](#):

- The allegation is reported to law enforcement; the Archdiocese cooperates fully with the investigation.
- The accused priest or layperson is immediately removed from ministry pending the result of the investigation.
- Parishes or schools where the accused is serving are notified.
- In cases where the statute of limitations does not allow for criminal prosecution, retired FBI investigators retained by the Archdiocese investigate the matter and report to the Clergy Misconduct Oversight Board which makes final recommendations.

The Archdiocese has also instituted [abuse prevention and reporting programs](#) for adults and minors; [fingerprinting and background checks](#) for employees and volunteers at parishes and schools; and clergy formation programs to prevent abuse. A toll-free number (800) 355-2545 was also established for reporting allegations of sexual abuse by Church personnel. These programs continue to serve as the backbone of abuse prevention and child safety efforts in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles today.

Since these programs were established 15 years ago, more than 329,000 adults have been trained in abuse prevention and reporting; 1.4 million Catholic school students have received age appropriate training that teaches them to understand appropriate and inappropriate boundaries and gives them the tools that empower them to take action and report if they feel uncomfortable, scared or confused; and more than 168,000 adults have been fingerprinted and undergone background checks.

These programs and policies do not take away from the very real harm that was done and the trust that has been broken in the Church. However, they are a testament to the commitment of the people of the Archdiocese, the majority of whom are lay Catholics who have worked for almost three decades to implement and carry out these programs to ensure:

- that abuse is reported to the police and investigated regardless of the statute of limitations;
- that victim-survivors and their families receive healing support; and
- that anyone found to have abused a minor at anytime in their lives, regardless of whether a member of the clergy or a lay person, is not allowed to serve in any capacity in the Archdiocese under zero tolerance.

In the face of recent scandals involving child sexual abuse and the Catholic Church, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles reaffirms our unwavering commitment to the healing of victim-survivors of abuse and protection against abuse and misconduct.

In order to address questions on what we have done and continue to do regarding the issue of abuse, the Archdiocese has compiled a timeline of efforts and actions taken since the issue began to be addressed nationally in 1985.

For more information on the Archdiocese's policies and protocols concerning abuse prevention and support for victim-survivors, visit www.archla.org/protecting.

TIMELINE OF ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF CLERGY ABUSE IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES, 1985-2018

The following timeline details the actions taken by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles since 1985 when the issue of clergy sexual abuse was first addressed nationally by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and locally by the newly-appointed Archbishop of Los Angeles, Roger Mahony. The chronology includes steps taken in response to the abuse crisis faced in the Catholic Church and in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles that began in 2002 that resulted in the adoption by the U.S. Bishops of the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#). The Charter implemented Essential Norms nationally for addressing sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons and includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, prevention of future acts of abuse and an annual audit process. [Each year, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has been found to be in full compliance with the Charter.](#)

June 1985 – U.S. Bishops, including then Bishop Roger Mahony who was serving in the Diocese of Stockton, attended presentations at their annual meeting on the dangers and issues of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy.

September 1985 – Bishop Mahony was installed as Archbishop of Los Angeles. In view of the discussion at the Bishops’ annual meeting, he initiated policies on sexual abuse of minors for the Archdiocese.

January 1986 – [The Office of the Vicar for Clergy](#) was created in the Archdiocese to oversee all issues of Clergy life more systematically.

June 1986 – During the Archdiocesan retreat for priests, Thomas J. Shephard, Sr., an attorney from Stockton, was invited to speak about the facts and dangers of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. Priests who felt they had any problems or issues with the sexual abuse of minors were invited to meet with the Archbishop. One priest, Michael Baker, met with Archbishop Mahony. The tragic lessons of reliance on the unverified word of a priest which were learned from the case of Michael Baker are reported as a case study in the [Report to the People of God](#), a comprehensive report of all clergy publicly or credibly accused of abuse from 1930-2003 which would be voluntarily published by the Archdiocese in February 2004.

June 1989 – A policy on any misconduct involving a priest was formally adopted for the first time as a result of dialogue with all priests of the Archdiocese initiated in 1987. These were the first norms on sexual abuse of minors issued in the Archdiocese. These norms were in place, enforced, and revised and strengthened over the years. The current policies are found in the [Administrative Handbook](#) of the Archdiocese. The policy as originally adopted and continuing today requires immediate investigation of any complaint, removal from ministry during any investigation and pastoral outreach to the victims and their families. As appropriate, priests were and continue to be required to undergo psychological evaluation and treatment before any consideration of a return to ministry. In the 1990s, parents of victims were encouraged to make a report to law enforcement and the Archdiocese cooperated with any ensuing investigation. In 2002, the policy was modified, and since then the Archdiocese initiates direct reports to law enforcement and as mandated reporters if a report has not already been made.

May 1994 – Cardinal Mahony announced the formation of the Sexual Abuse Advisory Board (SAAB) comprised of laity and clergy, including parents of a child victim and a therapist with expertise in sexual abuse and chaired by a retired Judge of the Superior Court. SAAB was tasked with the responsibility of reviewing all cases of clergy abuse pending in the Vicar for Clergy’s office and providing feedback and recommendations to the Vicar and the Cardinal.

From 1994 to 2002 – The Archdiocese continued to revise, expand and update policies and procedures, including a policy that, going forward, no priest credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor would be returned to ministry.¹ Other policies included reinforcing the practice of offering therapy for victims of sexual abuse, procedures to advise staff members and locations when a priest was no longer ministering, training for priests as mandated and non-mandated reporters on matters of potential child abuse, and background checks, including fingerprinting, for current and future priests.

April 2002 – The [Office of Victim’s Assistance Ministry](#) was established to deal with allegations of past or current sexual abuse by clergy, religious or any lay person working or volunteering for the Archdiocese. The Office is charged with creating a safe and compassionate environment for victims to come forward while ensuring that civil authorities are notified, and victims are provided with counseling and other assistance in the healing process. As the Office became more visible and established, it has also provided assistance and referrals to services for other victims of abuse and has become an active participant in other local and national social service outreach efforts and advisory groups.

June 2002 – As the U.S. Bishops approved [The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#), Cardinal Mahony announced a [Zero Tolerance Policy](#) for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which was later reaffirmed by Archbishop José H. Gomez. The Policy states that no person whether clergy, paid personnel or volunteer, who has been found to have abused a minor, at any time in their lives, may be in ministry in any capacity in the Archdiocese.¹ The Archdiocesan policy on Zero Tolerance is more expansive than the standards in the Charter and Norms.

June 2002 – The Archdiocese transitioned SAAB to the formal [Clergy Misconduct Oversight Board \(CMOB\)](#), which included an expansion of the number of lay people and a formal operating agreement consistent with the requirements of the Charter and Essential Norms. Going beyond the requirements of the Charter and Essential Norms, CMOB continued to address matters of abuse of both minor and adult victims. All reports of suspected child or adult sexual misconduct were and continue to be handled and reviewed by CMOB with the Board making direct disciplinary recommendations to the Archbishop, including recommendations, when appropriate, that priests be removed from ministry or returned to the lay state.

¹ This more cautious approach went forward even though the USCCB in *Restoring Trust* in 1994 continued to offer suggestions for partial ministry assignments and the Archdiocese also did not adopt the policy for prior matters. With the benefit of hindsight this was a mistake by the Archdiocese; seven priests were allowed to remain in limited ministry in 1995. From 1995-2000, no reports of misconduct or violations by any of these seven were received so the presumption, found to be erroneous in 2000, was that they were not harming anyone, and could continue ministry without being a danger to others.

Summer 2002 – [The Office of Safeguard the Children](#) was established to carry out mandates of the U.S. Bishops’ Charter and Norms through Children and Youth Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs. It established a Safeguard the Children Committee in each parish, offers abuse prevention and reporting programs for both adults and minors, is proactive in distributing educational information, and oversees activities and programs to commemorate the annual Abuse Prevention Month in April.

July 2002 – The State of California enacted legislation that provided a “window” to allow victims of abuse by clergy as minors to file civil claims during 2003 without limits on when the abuse occurred. More than 500 claims were brought naming the Archdiocese and various diocesan priests, religious order men and women, religious orders and other entities.

September 2003 – [The Archdiocesan Policy on Sexual Abuse by Clergy](#) was updated to incorporate The Charter and Essential Norms adopted by the Congregation of Bishops for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors. The Archdiocesan policy required that boundary violations, whether or not recognized as reportable in civil law, would be considered as misconduct and a violation of the policy. The Archdiocese Policy also addresses allegations of misconduct with adults as well as children.

January 2003 – Cardinal Mahony began meeting personally with victim-survivors of abuse. Since 2003, Cardinal Mahony met with 92 victim-survivors, often together with Judge Charles “Tim” McCoy, Jr., to listen to their stories and to offer them a personal apology and counseling for the harm that had been done to them.

August 2003 – The Archdiocese engaged retired FBI special agents to serve as independent canonical investigators to investigate all matters involving clergy misconduct, regardless of when the incident occurred. Their investigations became part of the Clergy Misconduct Oversight Board Review process.

February 2004 – [The Report to People of God](#) was published by the Archdiocese as a public acknowledgement of the scope of the abuse crisis in the Archdiocese and to express regret for shortcomings in the response to abuse that contributed to the scandal. The Report included a letter of apology from Cardinal Mahony on his behalf and for all Archdiocesan leaders as well as case studies of known abusers and the lessons learned from those cases. It reaffirmed the Archdiocese’s commitment to develop and maintain best practices to deal with incidents of abuse and provide support to victims of abuse.

July 2007 – The Archdiocese of Los Angeles announced a global settlement of the more than 500 civil cases that had been filed against the Archdiocese and various diocesan priests, religious order men and women, religious orders and other entities as a result of the opening of the Statute of Limitations.

March 2011 – Cardinal Mahony retired as Archbishop of Los Angeles. Archbishop José H. Gomez was installed as Archbishop.

January 2013 – The Archdiocese released 128 [clergy files](#) associated with the global settlement, including 88 files for diocesan priests and 40 files for religious orders and extern priests.

Present - Since 2004, the [Office of Safeguard the Children](#) of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has trained more than 329,000 adults, including school parents, staff and volunteers, in the [VIRTUS® child abuse prevention adult awareness programs](#). More than 168,000 adults have been fingerprinted as part of a program of background checks for Church and school personnel and volunteers. Also, during this time period, more than 1.4 million students have attended programs on abuse prevention and reporting. Every year, students at Catholic elementary and high schools, religious education, confirmation and youth ministry programs in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles receive age-appropriate child abuse prevention training. The “Empowering God’s Children” program is designed for Kindergarten through 12th grade students. This program teaches children and young people to understand appropriate and inappropriate boundaries and gives them the tools that empower them to take action and report if they feel uncomfortable, scared or confused.

The Archdiocese also has a toll-free number (800) 355-2545 to facilitate the confidential reporting of allegations of sexual abuse by Church personnel.

The Archdiocese continues its commitment outlined in the Report to the People of God to be forthcoming and enforce zero-tolerance by reporting abuse; cooperating actively with law enforcement concerning any abuse and misconduct with minors or adults; removing anyone who is found to have abused from ministry; making public announcements to all impacted by any removals from ministry; expanding education and training of seminarians; continuing and expanding protection and prevention programs; assuring that all matters are reviewed and addressed by CMOB; and, most importantly, supporting victims and their families.

For more information regarding the programs and policies of the Archdiocese, visit the Protecting Children page of the Archdiocesan website at www.archla.org/protecting.