

## **SAINT VINCENT ARCHABBEY ALLEGATION REVIEW BOARD**

### **Purpose and Essential Elements:**

Saint Vincent Archabbey has established an Allegation Review Board (Approved by the Council of Seniors on January 20, 2003) to ensure that a policy and procedures are in place to correspond and comply with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms* adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on June 14, 2002 and with the subsequent revisions approved and adopted during the General Meeting of the U.S.C.C.B on June 16-18, 2005. The *Essential Norms* text was granted *recognitio* by the Holy See and legitimately promulgated in accordance with the practice of the U.S.C.C.B on May 5, 2006.

The role of the Allegation Review Board is to provide advice and consultation to the Archabbot with respect to fulfillment of the Praesidium Accreditation Standards, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and *Essential Norms*, and other community standards for prevention and response to incidents and allegations of sexual abuse of minors. It is to discern the credibility of any new allegation of sexual abuse of a minor child or young person against a Member of the Benedictine Community and to review the Archabbey Policy: *Creating a Safe Environment for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults* for change and revision as needed.

The charge of the Board is to determine and to advise the Archabbot about whether or not there are sufficient grounds or reasons to follow up with additional investigation, or to take additional action concerning a particular allegation. The initial responsibility of the Allegation Review Board is to review circumstances surrounding the allegation and to make appropriate advisory recommendations to the Archabbot as to the credibility of the allegation and the accused monk's fitness for ministry. Should the Board advise that the allegation appears credible, the normal policy in regard to inappropriate behavior of Members of the Benedictine Community will be followed. In particular cases, it may also make recommendations relative to the fitness for ministry of an ordained monk or the appropriateness of a Member to participate in the apostolates of the Benedictine Community.

The Board may be called to review appropriate documentation concerning an allegation on brief notice. Board meetings may be conducted in person, by telephone conference call, or by web conferencing.

In cases falling outside of the civil statute of limitations, allegations need to be provided in writing and signed by the alleged victim. When the alleged victim wishes to preserve anonymity, the Archabbot will respect such a request in accord with Procedures and Rules, item A, listed below.

## **Procedures and Rules**

Upon receipt by the officials of the Archabbey of any allegation of sexual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult by a monk of the Archabbey, the following procedures are intended to be followed and control the performance or actions of the Board. These procedures were established solely for the purpose of presenting to the Archabbot a recommendation as to a particular course of action to be taken when a doubt remains regarding credibility of an allegation involving sexual misconduct or when the suitability to hold ecclesiastical office or any other ministerial office or assignment has been questioned.

- A. The Allegation Review Board will meet at least annually to provide recommendations regarding the response to reports and allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. The Board or the Archabbot, shall have the right to request an opportunity for the Board to interview either or both the alleged victim or the accused. The following documentation will be provided to the Review Board: a) the original report or allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a Member that was submitted to the Archabbey (without names), b) the final report of the investigation, c) all other allegations of sexual abuse by that member, and d) any relevant disciplinary actions that have been taken in the past in regard to that Member and the reasons for those actions. Requested anonymity will be respected within and by the Board, unless unavoidable or otherwise deemed necessary.
- B. The work of the Board is to be considered confidential. This includes private and public reporting or conversation. Each Member of the Board agrees to such confidentiality and will refrain from discussion or commenting outside of the Board to nonmembers, including inquiries from the media. All questions from the media are to be referred to the Archabbot's Delegate. When necessary and appropriate, normal and required reporting to civil authorities will be handled by the Archabbot's Delegate.
- C. After interview and/or review of documentation as described above, the Members of the Board shall submit its advisory findings and/or recommendations to the Archabbot in a summary report. This will contain the Board's opinion as to the credibility, or lack thereof, with respect to the allegation. In cases where alleged sexual abuse of a minor by a Member of the community cannot be investigated or established, the Review Board must provide consultation to the Archabbot concerning disposition of the case.
- D. The Allegation Review Board shall consist of at least five (5) Members, the majority of which are to be laypersons not in the employ of the

Archabbey. At least one (1) Member should have a particular expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors. At least one (1) Member should be a priest. The Archabbot may, if deemed necessary to achieve the goal and purposes of the Board, add additional Members to serve as permanent or temporary Members of the Board. The Members will be appointed for a term of five (5) years by the Archabbot. The Archabbot may exercise the option to extend individual appointments.

- E. Initial and on-going annual training will be provided to Review Board Members.
- F. Each Member of the Board shall be entitled to one (1) vote in determining the credibility of the presented allegation.
- G. The Board shall make its recommendations on the testimony and evidence presented. The parties may offer any evidence that they desire subject to the decision and approval of the Board as to its applicability and relevancy to determine the credibility of the allegation.
- H. Upon receipt of the Board's summary report, the Archabbot, depending upon the findings presented in that report, may conduct further investigation into the allegation and decide what further action needs to be taken, including following the guidelines implemented in the Archabbey Policy: *Creating a Safe Environment for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults*.
- I. During and following all interviews and review of appropriate documentation and information presented concerning a particular allegation, the Board Members and the Archabbot shall be aware of the continued need to protect the rights of privacy of the alleged victim, their family and those of the accused. Steps will be taken to conduct the Board's actions and the performance of its duties accordingly. The Board's summary report and recommendations are made to the Archabbot alone. Therefore, there is no publication or notice of them on the part of the Board. Nor is any Member of the Board to make known the identity of the alleged victim, the alleged victim's family or the accused, unless otherwise directed by either a legal order of the Court or upon the direction of the Archabbot.
- J. A request for review of an allegation by the Review Board shall be convened only by the Archabbot or one specifically appointed by the Archabbot.

- K. The Review Board will have the responsibility to annually review and make the appropriate recommendations to the Archabbot concerning safety (supervision) plans for those affected Members.

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