

Report on Clergy Sexual Abuse Update

Introduction

In this semi-annual update, the Implementation Working Group (“IWG”) is carrying out the work approved by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, based on the recommendations received from the Case Review Committee (“CRC”) in late 2019 (rcav.org/abuse-crisis/abuse-report/2019#crc). The IWG and the Review Board oversee different aspects of the reporting and tracking of abuse related files and the on-going care of victims who are in contact with Church representatives.

The processes currently in place increase accountability while providing a higher level of transparency and care for people reporting occurrences of abuse. This update shares both positive developments as well as ongoing challenges. This work is critical to increasing awareness among Catholics and to helping all people who have been affected by clergy sexual abuse. The Church is firmly committed to addressing this issue and underlying contributing factors fully and honestly.

31 Recommendations

You can find the full text of all the CRC recommendations at rcav.org/abuse-crisis/abuse-report/2019#recommendations

Progress since the December 2021 Update

1. Recommendation #11: An updated version of the Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Clergy is being finalized and a new summary of the reporting of Clergy Sexual Abuse process is now on-line. (<https://rcav.org/abuse-crisis/report-abuse/process>)
2. See Recommendation #14: Parish screening coordinators, priests and other Church employees continue to receive training and resources to help them be more aware of risks and the elements needed for a safe environment. Additional training for the broader Church community is now being developed.
3. Recommendation #15: Plans are underway to carry out the first Priest performance reviews later this year.
4. Recommendation #18: Fr. Bryan Duggan, Psy.D. is creating a team of local clerics and designing a program to help priests become more trauma-informed in order to be a support for victim/survivors seeking priest involvement.
5. Recommendation #19: The ad hoc Seminary Committee has completed its work and recently submitted its report to the Archbishop.
6. Recommendation #21: To increase transparency, the Archdiocese will provide periodic updates to Sylvia’s Site, a victim/survivor-led website.
7. Recommendation #24: Each parish is receiving prayers of the faithful, paralyturgy ideas and other resources to support a day of remembering for victim survivors.
8. Recommendation #25: The Clericalism Working group has contributed significantly to the development of the Priest Performance Review commitment and is now focusing on improving the systems of accountability that can be utilized by Parish Pastoral Councils.
9. Recommendation #26: Since our December 2021 update, women have been named to the following roles in the Archdiocese: Vice-Chancellor, Controller, Director of Parish Support and HR Manager

Objectives Still Outstanding

1. Recommendation #4: Internal employees are still developing a more comprehensive Victim/Survivor Care program based on input from mental health and trauma experts, local court Victim Services groups and law enforcement specialists. Our goal is to publish a program summary in the November 2022 update.
2. Recommendation #10: Several potential 3rd parties experienced in the auditing of historical records have been identified but no selection has been made. To date, only the files of priests with allegations have been fully reviewed.
3. Recommendation #22: The IWG has not been able to find someone to develop this program nor have any previous offenders been willing to participate.

Names for Publication

Fr. Placidus Sander

Fr. Placidus Sander was born in Oregon in 1927, ordained in 1952 and died in 2021.

He served in the following roles within the geographic boundaries of the Archdiocese of Vancouver:

1. Theology teacher at Christ the King Seminary, Mission BC: 1954-1997
2. Rector of Minor Seminary at Christ the King Seminary, Mission BC: 1955-1965
3. Vice-rector at Christ the King Seminary, Mission, BC: , 1973-1988

In May of 1987, the Papal Nuncio received an anonymous letter signed “Former Seminarians,” alleging that Fr. Placidus was known to have been involved in homosexual activities with high school seminarians and asking that he be removed from his role as Vice-rector. Fr. Placidus was removed from that role nine months after the first letter was received.

In 1993, accusations were brought forward by three men who reported to law enforcement that Fr. Placidus had sexually abused them during their time as minor students at the Seminary of Christ the King. The Court acquitted Fr. Placidus of these charges in 1997. During the hearings, Fr. Placidus admitted to a single sexual encounter with “an older seminarian” and to kissing one student twice. Upon learning of this admission, the Benedictines removed Fr. Placidus from classroom teaching but he continued to act as a Spiritual Advisor for Major Seminarians, lead the chant program and work in the kitchen. In 2017, Fr. Placidus retired to the Infirmary of the Abbey, where he lived until his death on October 15, 2021.

A civil claim regarding the same accusations from the 1993 criminal case has recently been filed.

The allegations are being published by the Archdiocese at this time because the criminal proceedings have concluded and the plaintiff(s) with civil claims have requested such publication. The Archdiocese was previously advised, including by law enforcement representatives, not to publish information during the course of the legal proceedings.

Conclusion

Since our last update in December of 2021, we have made progress in the clarified reporting process and renewed training efforts as parish communities reopened post Covid.

As an ongoing part of the work against clerical sexual abuse, the Archdiocese continues to encourage victims of abuse to come forward and report their experiences to the Office of Victim/Survivor Support at (604) 363- 7338 or 1-800-968-3146. We thank the survivors who have spoken out. We recognize how much courage it takes, and we appreciate your strength in shedding light on this history.

If you would like to share ideas regarding how we can better care for victim/survivors, please feel free to write us at CareForVS@rcav.org.