

Bishop Kemme has asked that the following article be distributed with bulletins the weekend of Sept. 22nd & 23rd. This article will also appear in the Catholic Advance.

The Diocese of Wichita has had policies regarding protection of youth for over 15 years.

Therese Seiler, vice chancellor and victim assistance coordinator for the diocese, said Bishop Carl A. Kemme has a diverse group of individuals, a Review Board, who act in an advisory capacity regarding allegations of child sexual abuse by Church personnel as well as assisting with review of policies and procedures with a focus on safeguarding youth.

In addition to Seiler and Bishop Kemme, members of the Review Board are Father David Lies, the diocesan vicar general, a pastor, a judge, a representative of law enforcement, a clinical psychologist, a physician, and a social worker.

"It is a good breadth of people and experience to assist the bishop as we move forward to create safe environments for youth," Seiler said last week.

Although the board meets quarterly to review policies and procedures, she said, a special meeting will be called if necessary to address a complaint of child sexual abuse when abuse by diocesan personnel is alleged.

The diocese, of course, follows the mandatory reporting laws of the State of Kansas, she said. "Those state that if someone has reason to believe that a child has been abused, they do have to report that...to law enforcement or to the Kansas Department of Children and Families."

Mandatory reporters include employees of diocesan Catholic schools, counselors, doctors, and nurses.

The diocese also has a separate reporting policy.

"If there is an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor child, under 18, by Church personnel, it should first be reported to law enforcement or the

Kansas Department of Children and Families...it would then need to be reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the diocese," Seiler said.

If she receives an allegation, she reaches out to the victim's family for additional information, encourages them to report the matter to authorities, and lets them know she may also report the matter.

"It would then go before the Charter Review Board for discussion," Seiler said. "Names are not discussed, only the situations that have been brought forward."

Bishop Kemme published a letter in the Sept. 7 edition of the Catholic Advance, that is also at CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org, reflecting on the sexual abuse crisis in the church.

"I feel compelled to respond in a way that will bring forth for all entrusted with leadership in our wounded Church the graces we bishops need to restore the trust of our good people," he wrote.

The abuse has scandalized many in the church and must end, he said.

"We have and must continue to develop clear, transparent and effective policies and procedures to address this crisis; we must also rely on prayer; intense and frequent prayer," Bishop Kemme said.

"Prayer coupled with fasting will drive this demon out and restore the peace that we so long for in our church. We who allowed this demon to wreak havoc in our hearts, the bishops, must also do penance and make reparation."

Bishop Kemme said he will be fasting and praying on the first Friday of the month and spend his holy hour on that day "in reparation for my sins and in particular for the sins and crimes of bishops, priests and religious who have abused minors and young adults in any way."

He welcomed anyone else, especially priests and religious, to adopt the practice to combat "this powerful and destructive demon of our times."