



Office of Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller

Report on Review of Child Sexual Abuse by Clergy in the Catholic Church

June 2021

Many state attorneys general have focused on the issue of sexual abuse of children by clergy in the Roman Catholic Church. Notably, Josh Shapiro, the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, convened a state-wide grand jury that produced a [scathing report](#) outlining widespread sexual abuse of children within six dioceses of the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania and the systemic cover-up by senior church officials.

Like other state attorneys general, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller began to focus on this issue in late 2018. In a [statement](#) issued in November 2018, Miller said he was “appalled” by the findings in Pennsylvania. He announced that the Iowa Attorney General’s Office (“Office”) would begin gathering information on sexual abuse of children by clergy (“clergy abuse”) from the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Diocese of Des Moines, the Diocese of Davenport and the Diocese of Sioux City (“Dioceses”). He also said he had met with the Bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines and would meet with the other Catholic bishops in Iowa. And, he said his Office had met with survivors of clergy abuse and would continue to reach out to other abuse survivors.



AUTHORITY/PROCESS

To gather information used to issue his report, the Pennsylvania Attorney General used his power to call a statewide grand jury which compelled the Catholic Church to testify and produce documents about clergy abuse. Some state attorneys general have used their authority to call grand juries and/or subpoena documents relating to alleged criminal activities. Some states, like Iowa, do not possess statewide grand jury power.

Attorney General Miller directed his staff to evaluate the authority of the Office in this context. The general legal understanding is that the power to investigate and prosecute crimes in Iowa rests with the county attorneys. The Office realized the realities of the statute of limitations in these cases and the lack of clarity around the authority to compel the Dioceses to testify or produce documents through a grand jury proceeding or subpoenas. Miller therefore directed his staff to begin an effort allowing the Dioceses to participate voluntarily in a process that would conclude with an independent assessment and report on clergy abuse in Iowa. The goal is to tell the truth about what has happened and, through that process, potentially provide some accountability and closure.

In his November 2018 statement, Miller said he expected the Dioceses to comply with the order of the U.S. Department of Justice to preserve documents related to clergy abuse and personnel. In the following months, Miller and his staff met individually with the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Bishop of the



Diocese of Des Moines, the Bishop of the Diocese of Davenport, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Sioux City (“Bishops”). The Bishops were accompanied by attorneys and/or other church officials. At these meetings, Miller asked the Bishops to explain how allegations of clergy abuse are handled in their respective Dioceses. He also said his Office would be requesting information from the Dioceses about clergy abuse.

In June of 2019, Miller announced he had sent a letter to the Bishops requesting information about clergy abuse. He expressed his appreciation to the Bishops for meeting, but said a credible third-party review was warranted.

Subsequently, the Bishops sent a letter that raised concerns about Miller’s request, including the following: (1) Concerns the request was too extensive, and it would be time-consuming and costly to comply with the request. (2) Concerns about maintaining the confidentiality of documents provided to the Office; and (3) Concerns about protecting the good name of clergy who were not credibly accused. Miller met jointly with all the Bishops on July 9, 2019.

On Aug. 7, 2019, Miller sent a follow-up letter to each of the Bishops. The letters addressed the concerns about confidentiality and fair treatment of clergy. The letters also narrowed the request to focus on priests who had been accused of clergy abuse, but the accusations were not found to be credible or substantiated by the Dioceses and, therefore, the priests’ names were not added to published lists.



The letters state: “Experts agree that a key part of the healing process for victims is the publication of full and accurate lists of the names of abusive clergy and where they have been assigned. While we commend the changes the Iowa Catholic dioceses have made to serve victims and to report allegations to law enforcement and other investigators, we think an independent, third-party evaluation of the process of deciding which clergy were included on public lists by the dioceses is warranted. This fresh look by trained professionals in our office would provide assurances to victims and the public generally that all credibly accused clergy have been publicly identified.”

Specifically, the letters requested documents relating to priests against whom sexual abuse allegations were lodged, but the allegations were determined not to be credible or substantiated. The letter requested all information that Review Boards considered with respect to these priests, including records describing the accusations, evaluation of the alleged abuse by private investigators, and any other relevant documents. The letter also requested minutes of the meetings of Review Boards when allegations against these priests were discussed.

Responses to these letters by each of the Dioceses is discussed below.

REACHING OUT TO VICTIMS

Throughout this process, Miller reached out to victims of clergy abuse, including victims outside the Catholic Church. In November of 2018, Miller [invited](#)



survivors of clergy abuse to contact his office and share their experiences by calling the Iowa Crime Victims Helpline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In June of 2019, a specific hotline was [established](#) for victims of clergy abuse, with trained advocates available to gather information from survivors. Also, survivors could fill out a [questionnaire](#) on the Office's website. The reports were reviewed by an investigator in the Office who often sought additional information. Survivors were informed that their identities would remain confidential.

To spread the word, the Office leveraged news coverage and social media and reached out to victim groups. In addition, the Office launched an outreach plan to publicize the hotline later in 2019. The outreach included digital media, radio advertising, and targeted mailings. Federal funds in the amount of \$18,000 were expended for this outreach.

Miller also met individually with survivors of clergy abuse and members of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. The SNAP members emphasized the need for the Office to establish a hotline and to take actions to ensure that the Dioceses' lists of credibly accused clergy were complete and accurate.



SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS

A listing of the complaints received by the Office via the hotline or website submission form is produced in an addendum to this report. Names of the submitters have been protected. The names of the accused were withheld unless the accusations had been made public or the priests are on Diocese lists. The lists can be found here:

[Davenport Diocese](#)

[Des Moines Diocese](#)

[Dubuque Archdiocese](#)

[Sioux City Diocese](#)

[Other denominations](#)

Here is a summary of the complaints:

- The office received 50 complaints. Of those, 45 complaints were against Catholic clergy or others involved in the Catholic church. Five were about non-Catholic pastors or spiritual leaders.
- The complaints made accusations against 36 Catholic priests or brothers.



- None of the complaints involving Catholic clergy fell within the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution. The allegations ranged from the 1930s to 1997.¹
- Three of the allegations involved active Catholic priests.
- Twenty-nine complaints named a priest or priests who are listed on one of the Diocese lists of credibly accused priests.
- Seventeen of the complainants said they had never reported the allegations previously to any authorities.
- Of the reports regarding non-Catholic pastors, two involve allegations within the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution. These allegations involve possible adult victims.

¹ On May 12, 2021, Gov. Kim Reynolds signed Senate File 562, which eliminates the criminal statute of limitations for filing child sex abuse charges. The law applies to allegations in which the statute of limitations has not already expired. Under previous law, charges had to be filed within 15 years after the victim turned 18 years old. In all of the complaints submitted, the statute of limitations had expired.



DIOCESE OF SIOUX CITY

According to its website, the Diocese of Sioux City has a “Safe Environment” program, which includes a Code of Conduct, employee/volunteer background checks, and assistance for victims of clergy abuse. According to its website, Diocese has had a [Diocesan Review Board](#) since 2002. It comprises seven voting members appointed by the Bishop and includes licensed therapists, a judge, nurses, police officers, and a psychiatrist. Diocesan officials, including the Bishop and the Diocesan attorney, attend meetings. Every claim of sexual abuse is reported to local authorities and the Diocesan Review Board. The Board reviews the evidence and determines whether the allegation is credible or not credible. According the Diocesan attorney, a “credible claim” includes every claim in which an allegation of abuse “could have happened” and is “within the realm of possibility.”

The Diocese of Sioux City did not have a published list of credibly accused priests until Feb. 25, 2019. In November of 2018, the Diocese announced it would finalize and publicize the list. According to the Sioux City Journal, this “vow came in response to the Pennsylvania grand jury [report] ...” The [list](#) contained the names of 28 priests credibly accused of abusing minors and has since been updated to include 31 priests.

The list contains the names of priests who had multiple credible allegations of abuse, including Jerome Coyle and Bernard McFadden.



The list also included the year of ordination, parishes served and dates of service, number of allegations, gender of victims, approximate date of abuse, and current status of the priest. On the day the list was released, Bishop Nickless [said](#), “Today, our diocese will reckon with part of its own shameful history by releasing the names of priests credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors.”

The Diocese stated “[t]he list originally contained another name not listed here; however, the diocese received notification that one of the priests has appealed to Rome, and therefore his information is being withheld pending resolution.” The name of this priest, Gerald Hartz, was added to the list on Dec. 14, 2020.

Since the list was released, the names of two priests were added, in addition to Gerald Hartz. The allegation against one priest was received by the Diocese on or about Dec. 25, 2018, and was under review at the time the list was released. The allegation against the other priest was received after the list was publicized on Feb. 27, 2019.

In response to the Office’s letter of Aug. 7, 2019, the Diocese sent a letter to the Office on Sept. 30, 2019, identifying the names of seven priests against whom allegations of sexual abuse were lodged, but the allegations were not found to be credible by the Diocesan Review Board. Relevant documents requested by the Office were included. The Diocese stated that it did not use any private investigators when reviewing complaints of clergy abuse. An investigator in the



Office's Crime Victim Assistance Division reviewed the documents. This investigator has extensive experience in law enforcement and victim services.

On March 5, 2020, the Office sent a follow-up letter asking for additional information about three of the seven priests, having concluded that it had no evidence that would contradict the Diocese's determination that the allegations against the other four priests were not credible. Also, the Office requested information about four priests that were not identified by the Diocese but were accused of clergy abuse by complainants filing reports with the Office via the hotline or submissions on the Office's website.

On April 2, 2020, the Diocese provided additional information. One priest, Gerald Hartz, who was accused by a complainant, had been on the list and was removed because the priest filed a petition with the Vatican, which was pending. As previously mentioned, Gerald Hartz was added to the list on Dec. 14, 2020.

Staff from the Office had a follow-up call with the attorney and the Vicar General of the Diocese to seek clarification of the facts concerning two priests:

The first priest, Brian Danner, was accused of improperly rubbing the top of the leg of a minor in the confessional in 2017. According to the attorney, the Review Board was unable to determine there was sexual intent involved. However, the attorney stated that the Review Board thought this was a serious boundary violation and an unwanted touching amounting to an assault. The allegation was



reported to the Humboldt County attorney, who declined to pursue charges. While not putting Danner on the list, the Diocese removed him from active ministry. He is not functioning as a priest currently.

The second priest had one allegation that he wrongfully touched a juvenile after 2002. The Review Board, pursuant to protocol, advised civil authorities of the allegation. The juvenile's family did not want to pursue the matter. Several years later, the man, now an adult, was contacted by a representative of the Diocese. The man stated he was satisfied with how the Diocese had handled the matter and "respectfully declined" to offer any further information. The priest is active in the Diocese.

Summary and Recommendations

After the Office announced its inquiry of clergy abuse in November 2018, the Diocese of Sioux City posted a list of credibly accused priests. It continues to review new complaints and update the list. The Office thinks the Diocese has operated in good faith to prepare and update the list.



ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE

The Archdiocese of Dubuque has a [“Policy for the Protection of Children,”](#) which includes Standards of Conduct, background checks for employees or volunteers, and assistance for victims of clergy abuse. The Archdiocese has a [Review Board](#) of five to 12 members appointed by the Archbishop. At least five of the members must be “in full communion with the Catholic Church.” The majority are laypersons not in the employ of the church, one is a priest, and one has expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors. The Review Board investigates the allegations to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of clergy abuse. “Sufficient evidence” is understood by the Archdiocese to mean probable cause, that is, there are reasonable grounds to believe the incident more than likely did occur. The Archdiocese uses private investigators to investigate claims of clergy abuse.

All reports of clergy abuse are reported to civil authorities, with narrow exceptions. The Archdiocese faced numerous lawsuits in the past and paid nearly \$14 million in settlements with victims of clergy abuse, according to the Dubuque Telegraph Herald. As part of those settlements, the Archdiocese agreed to post a Table of Accused Priests on their website for a period of years. The Archdiocese voluntarily has continued to have the list publicly available after that period.

[The Table of Accused Priests](#) contains the names of 31 priests. It also contains the date of the earliest claimed abuse, the dates of birth, ordination, and death,



comments about the abuse and any resolution (e.g. settlement, mediation).

Following the Table, there is a listing of the dates and places of assignment of priests included in the Table. The Table was updated on Sept. 13, 2018, and three priests were added to the Table.

Following the Table, child abuse allegations against two priests and reasons the priests were not placed on the Table are discussed.

In response to the Office's letter of Aug. 7, 2019, the Archdiocese sent a letter to the Office on Sept. 30, 2019, identifying the names of eight priests against whom allegations of sexual abuse were lodged, but the allegations were not found to be credible by the Diocesan Review Board. Relevant documents requested by the Office were included. The investigator in the Office's Crime Victim Assistance Division reviewed the documents and contacted a private investigator who had been retained by the Archdiocese to review the allegations.

On March 5, 2020, the Office sent a follow-up letter asking for additional information about two of the eight priests, having concluded that it did not have evidence that would contradict the Archdiocese's determination that the allegations against the other six priests were not credible. Also, the Office requested information about five priests that were not identified by the Diocese but were accused of clergy abuse by complainants filing reports with the Office via the hotline or submissions on the Office's website. Also, the Office requested



information about a clergy member not identified by the Diocese but who is listed on the [Bishop Accountability website](#).

On April 2, 2020, the Diocese provided additional information. The Office sent a follow-up email to the Archdiocese on Aug. 31, 2020, requesting additional information about a priest about whom information was sought in the March 5 letter. The Office also requested information about a priest who was recently accused of clergy abuse by a complainant filing a report with the Office.

On Aug. 31, 2020, the Archdiocese provided additional information about these two priests:

In one case, the Office has received two submissions alleging that a priest had abused minors in the 1970s. One of the submissions had never been reported previously. The Archdiocese provided information showing that an individual came forward in 2016 alleging abuse by the priest in the 1970s, when the individual was 14. The priest was not active in ministry at the time of the accusation. The Archdiocese reported the allegation to a local sheriff, and no charges were filed. The priest has since died.

In the second case, the Office has received a submission alleging that a priest had abused a juvenile in 1990-91 at a state institution. At the Office's request, the Archdiocese provided information relating to allegations of abuse that were



reported to the state institution in 1991. Individuals had alleged that the abuse occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The priest was dismissed from state employment in 1991 because of allegations of indecent contact. The priest denied the charges. After a series of hearings, an administrative law judge ruled that the charges were “undetermined.” Because the allegations were made to the state institution, and not the Archdiocese, the Archdiocese accepted the investigation and findings of the judge. The Archdiocese received two additional allegations at a later date, and those also dated to the late 1980s-early 1990s. In those two cases, the individuals told the Archdiocese that they did not want to pursue investigations. The priest is now retired.

Summary and Recommendations

Since agreeing to legal settlements requiring the payment of considerable compensation to clergy abuse victims and the establishment of a list of credibly accused clergy, the Office thinks the Archdiocese has generally acted in good faith to voluntarily maintain and update its list of credibly accused priests.



DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT

The Diocese of Davenport has a [“Safe Environment”](#) program, which includes Policies Relating to Sexuality and Personal Behavior, background checks for employees and volunteers, and assistance for victims of clergy abuse. Included is a Diocesan Review Board, which is appointed by the Bishop. A majority of the Review Board is to consist of laypersons not in the employ of the Diocese. The Review Board must consist of at least five members of “outstanding integrity and good judgment who are in full communion with the Church.” At least one member “should be a priest who is an experienced and respected pastor with the Church and at least one member should have expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors.”

The Review Board investigates [allegations](#) of clergy abuse. With respect to allegations against living priests, the Review Board uses a “preponderance of evidence” standard to determine if the allegations are credible. With respect to allegations against deceased priests, the Review Board uses a “clear and convincing standard, a more rigorous standard because they are not alive to defend themselves.” The Diocese uses private investigators.

All reports of clergy abuse are reported to the Scott County Attorney’s Office, pursuant to a memorandum of understanding that has been in place for many years. Exceptions are in place for confidential communications made in the course of the confessor-penitent relationship and other privileged communications.



The Diocese has been publishing a list of credibly abused priests since February 2004. The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Iowa, Davenport Division, entered a bankruptcy reorganization plan for the Diocese. In addition to sizable payments to victims, the Bankruptcy Court's orders included extensive non-monetary undertakings for the Diocese. The required actions of the Diocese included the following: (1) Posting on its website a prominent link to the names of all known perpetrators of clergy abuse; (2) Visits by the Bishop to all parishes in which clergy abuse occurred and public identification of perpetrators; (3) Publishing information about how victims of clergy abuse can report abuse to local authorities and obtain assistance; (4) Sending letters of apology from the Bishop to victims; and (5) Providing newspaper space for victims to publish their stories of clergy abuse.

The Diocese currently has 35 people on its "[List of Credible Allegations Against Priests, Brothers, and Lay Employees.](#)" At the end of the list is a "Court-Ordered Listing" of three priests. These priests were deceased at the time of the investigation and the Bankruptcy Court used a "preponderance of the evidence" standard and found the allegations credible. It ordered the Diocese to list the three priests. The Review Board did not list them voluntarily because the allegations did not meet its "clear and convincing" standard for deceased priests.



The Diocese's list contains the name of the clergy, the date of the earliest claimed abuse, year of death, parish assignments and dates, year of ordination, and comments about the alleged abuse.

In response to the Office's letter of Aug. 7, 2019, the Diocese sent a letter on Nov. 11, 2019, listing the names of 20 priests who were found to be non-credibly accused of clergy abuse. The letter states that nearly all of the priests listed were deceased and most of them were considered as part of the Bankruptcy proceeding. The letter also states that the Review Board planned to look again at the investigation materials relating to three of the priests identified in the letter. Documents relating to the 20 priests were subsequently mailed to the Office. The investigator in the Office's Crime Victim Assistance Division reviewed the documents.

On March 5, 2020, the Office sent the Diocese a letter requesting additional information about six of the 20 priests, having concluded that it did not have evidence that would contradict the Diocese's determination that the allegations against the other 14 priests were not credible. The Office also requested information about priests who were the subject of complaints filed with the Office and/or who were listed on the [Bishop Accountability website](#).

In March of 2020, staff from the Office had a telephone call with the Diocesan attorney to clarify the request. On June 5, 2020, the Diocese sent a letter with more information about 10 priests. With respect to two priests, the Diocese stated that



there were confidential mental health records of accusers that could not be released. However, the Diocesan attorney did review the records and states in the letter that the records did not contain any mention of abuse. The Office has concluded that it has no evidence that would contradict the Diocese's determination that the allegations against six of the priests were not credible.

Regarding the remaining four priests:

1-3) The letter also indicated the Review Board was continuing to review three priests the Office has inquired about in its letter of March 5, 2020. The review had been delayed due to COVID-19.

On May 6, 2021, the Office received a letter from the Diocese. The letter stated that the Review Board had met concerning the three priests. The Board determined that allegations of clergy abuse against two of the priests were not credible.

Regarding the third priest, the board said it "revisited its decision and all information available to it regarding alleged abuse by John Ryan. Since it made its original decision, new information came to its attention, and the Review Board determined there was credible evidence of abuse." Ryan was placed on the list of credible allegations in 2021.



Ryan, who died in 1992, had been accused of sexually abusing three male minors. The abuse occurred dating back to 1946, and information was provided to the Diocese in 2008 and 2016.

4) The Office received a complaint about Father John Stack, who was removed from the ministry in 2013 after an accusation of abuse involving minors in the 1980s. An Ecclesiastical Trial later [found](#) the allegations not proven, and Stack was reinstated and remains active.

Summary and Recommendations

After monetary and non-monetary requirements imposed by the Bankruptcy Court, the Office thinks the Diocese has generally acted in good faith to maintain and update its list of credibly accused clergy.

The Office agrees with the Bankruptcy Court that the proper standard for all complaints of clergy abuse, including claims lodged against deceased priests, is preponderance of the evidence, not clear and convincing.



DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

According to its website, the Diocese of Des Moines has a [Victim Assistance program](#), which includes a Code of Conduct, background screening for employees and volunteers, and assistance for victims of clergy abuse. The Diocese has an [Allegation Review Committee](#) appointed by the Bishop. The Committee comprises seven members appointed by the Bishop, including a retired teacher, a psychologist, a district court judge, an attorney, a chief of police, the Vicar General of the Diocese, and a Deacon of the Diocese.

According to its [website](#), the Diocese “will report allegations of sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement within 24 hours of receiving them. The diocese will cooperate in any investigation with law enforcement.”

The Allegation Review Committee reviews allegations of clergy abuse. If the claims are found to be “substantiated,” the names of the priests will be added to the “List of Substantiated Abuse.” According to a [press release](#) of the Diocese, “[a] substantiated claim is one for which sufficient evidence exists to establish reasonable grounds to believe the alleged abuse occurred.”

Following the Office’s announcement of its inquiry into clergy abuse in November 2018, the Diocese released [a list](#) of nine priests with substantiated allegations of clergy abuse on April 4, 2019. Compared with other dioceses, it was late in doing so.



The list contained the names of nine priests. In addition to the names, the list includes the year of ordination, number of allegations, gender of victim, approximate date of abuse, current status, and parishes and institutions with dates of assignments. According to the [release](#), only files of living priests were reviewed by a private investigator. And, according to the release, the Diocese did not disclose names of priests who had a single, uncorroborated allegation against them after death “since it was not possible to substantiate the claim.”

In response to the Office’s letter of Aug. 7, 2019, the Diocese sent a letter and spreadsheet containing the names of 19 priests against whom allegations of clergy abuse had been made but were found by the Diocese to be unsubstantiated. Seventeen of the claims were flagged as “not public” and two were flagged as “public.” Relevant documents requested by the Office were included. The investigator in the Office’s Crime Victim Assistance Division reviewed the documents.

On March 5, 2020, the Office sent a follow-up letter asking for additional information about 13 of the 19 priests. The Office concluded that it did not have evidence that would contradict the Diocese’s determination that the allegations against six priests were unsubstantiated.

Also, the Office requested information about two priests that were not identified by the Diocese but were accused of clergy abuse by complainants filing reports with



the Office via the hotline or submissions on the Office’s website. One of the priests was Robert Grant.

On March 18, 2020, the Diocese provided additional information on those 15 priests. The Diocese also stated that it had recently learned of the allegation against Robert “Bud” Grant. The Diocese said it was investigating that claim of abuse and would be creating documentation to be shared with the Office in the future. The Diocese also issued a [press release](#) concerning the allegation. The release stated that the “[t]he Diocese has been in contact the Attorney General Miller’s office to communicate the receipt of the allegation, summary of actions taken, and the intended process going forward.”

A follow-up phone call was held on July 27, 2020, with the Diocesan attorney and staff from the Office. Staff requested clarification on several points: First, staff asked about the review process used to evaluate the credibility of abuse allegations lodged against eight priests for which no information was provided by the Diocese. The attorney stated that the allegations were made after the priests were deceased and only involved one complainant. With respect to each priest, the attorney said the Diocese interviewed the complainant. He stated resources were not spent to have a private investigator review the allegations.

Staff asked for assurances that the Diocese had given permission to private investigators to speak to the Office’s investigator. The attorney said the private investigators would be told to talk freely with the Office. The attorney said the



private investigator had done an audit of all priest files for accusations of abuse and misconduct. The Office requested the results of the audit.

The staff also asked for an update on the allegation against Robert Grant.

On Nov. 24, 2020, the Diocese [released](#) the findings of the investigation of Grant. The Diocese said that the investigation, launched in March of 2020, “clearly established that the allegation did not meet the criteria of sexual abuse of a minor as defined by Church law at the time of the incident, because the complainant was above majority age.” The accuser told the Office that the abuse occurred while he was a student in high school. Grant denies this.

The Diocese went on to say Father Grant “engaged in behavior in select instances in the early 1990s that violated the Sixth Commandment and his priestly promises.” The Diocese said due to the “seriousness of the misconduct” restrictions would be imposed on Father Grant. The restrictions, in essence, prohibit Grant from being in contact with individuals under the age of 24 without supervision. The restrictions are in place for a year, with review and adjustment, as necessary.

Father Grant was allowed to return to teaching at St. Ambrose University in Davenport and to serve a parish in Blue Grass. The Diocese of Davenport issued a [press release](#) reiterating the points made in the release issued by the Diocese of Des Moines.



Summary and Recommendations

The Office has two concerns:

- The presumption in cases involving deceased priests. Complaints about deceased priests by a single complaint were not followed up on. While the Office disagrees with this policy, it is similar to the Davenport Diocese's "clear and convincing standard" toward deceased priests.
- The failure to turn over some investigative reports claiming that since the reports were requested by an attorney, they were protected by the attorney-client privilege.

However, the Diocese has produced a realistic list. The Office does not necessarily agree with all the determinations, especially regarding deceased priests, but those decisions are in a gray area. The Office puts great significance on the Diocese's practice of reporting all complaints to law enforcement authorities. Also, the Office notes that new leadership is in place that was not part of any previous questionable decisions.



CONCLUSIONS

1) Sexual abuse took place over decades. The complaints, the victims, the duration of the abuse were overwhelming. This is well known, but never should be minimized. Iowa is not different from the rest of the country. Our hearts go out to the victims of these acts. The consequences are severe and lifelong.

2) The cover-up was extensive. Again, Iowa is not different from the rest of the country. The image and reputation of the church were put ahead of the enormous harm to young people.

3) Members of the Office, including Attorney General Miller, talked to victims personally and listened to them describe how the abuse affected their lives. The pain was real and lasting, whether the abuse happened 60 years ago or more recently. In some cases, survivors explained why they kept the abuse secret; in others, they described how their allegations were ignored or covered up for decades.

4) In response to the Charter for the Protection of Children as adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June of 2002, the Dioceses have put policies and procedures in place for the protection of children from clergy abuse. This has led to several changes in the Church, evident by the reports of



clergy abuse since 2002. Only five priests have been the subject of allegations for actions that occurred during or after 2002:

a) One of these priests is on the lists of credibly accused priests maintained by the Dioceses: Richard Poster, who was accused of and pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography in the Diocese of Davenport in 2002.

b) Two cases from the Sioux City Diocese are referenced above: Danner, who was accused of improperly touching a child on the thigh and was later removed from active ministry; and an allegation involving a priest touching a youth (mentioned above).

c) Two cases from the Des Moines Diocese, one of which involves possession of “homosexual pornography” and another who was convicted of invasion of privacy but whose conviction was overturned.

5) All four Dioceses have for years reported any complaints of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities. There is no standard for reporting or not reporting. This is a fundamental reform.

6) None of the current bishops have been involved in handling previous complaints and resulting cover-ups. All are relatively new to their positions. In other states, questions have been raised about those involved in the cover-up remaining in authority and continuing those decisions. That is not the case in Iowa.



7) The Dioceses have become more responsive to victims of clergy abuse. Several victims who communicated to the Office via the hotline or website complaints stated their claims were not investigated for many years after the complaints were made to the Dioceses. In other cases, people who submitted complaints to our office said they were not comfortable making claims when the abuse occurred decades ago. The Office hopes this has changed. All of the Dioceses now have information about how to report clergy abuse on their websites. Three of the Dioceses list the telephone number for the Office's Hotline.

8) Religious authorities of all denominations must continue to encourage people to come forward with reports and ensure it is safe to do so. No matter how old the accusation, these reports can lead to healing and reforms. Seventeen people came forward with accusations for the first time via the Office's hotline and website. While all the incidents occurred outside the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution, our office offered resources to survivors. In one case, the submission led to the investigation of Father Robert Grant.

9) All the Dioceses now have published lists of credibly abused priests. This transparency is crucial for the healing of victims and church accountability. Two of the Dioceses – Sioux City and Des Moines – published these lists subsequent to our involvement.



Our investigation focused on the decisions to include some accused priests on the lists and exclude others. Since our review began, three names were added to the list in the Diocese of Sioux City and one name was added to the list in the Diocese of Davenport.

Three of the dioceses – Dubuque, Davenport and Sioux City – seem to fit a similar pattern. In the Sioux City Diocese, 31 priests were put on the list and seven were not. In the Dubuque Archdiocese, 31 priests were put on the list, eight were not. In the Davenport Diocese, 33 priests were put on the list and 20 were not.

We believe that the three dioceses made a good-faith effort to comply with their lists. We may have made some decisions differently, but they are in the gray area.

In Des Moines, the ratio is different. Nine priests were placed on the list and 19 were not. However, we note that the differences we had with the Dioceses were also in the gray area. All complaints are reported to law enforcement. New leadership is in place.

Clergy abuse of children was a long and sad period in the history of the Catholic Church. Severe consequences remain today for many victims, many of them abused decades ago. However, it should be pointed out that some things have changed, most notably the automatic reporting of any complaints concerning abuse to the criminal authorities.

