

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Transcript of Video Update, Nov. 15, 2019:

“Safeguarding, Responding, and Healing from Abuse”

Bishop Mark Hagemoen, Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon update related to diocesan policies on safe church environments and serious misconduct, including sexual abuse.

1. I would like to open my comments by quoting a message conveyed by Sister Nancy Brown at our Clergy Study Days this past week:

“The body of Christ has been broken by the scandal of clerical abuse. All members of the community have been affected by this grave injustice. During this time of intense pain and shame, all are called to show compassionate care, listening deeply to the pain, shame, anger, confusion, disbelief and questioning of faith. It is a time to listen unconditionally without judgement, rejecting all cover-ups, revealing all secrets, calling perpetrators to accountability and walking with the survivors. Safeguarding within the church means working toward the elimination of violence and cultivating a culture of peace and harmony.”

We need to listen to and support victims and survivors. This is the perspective from which all our efforts begin.

2. **Assessing and improving how allegations are reported** is part of this.

We aim to have a process of ‘intake’ that is clear and straightforward. Persons can report to either one of several people, which includes a lay person and a woman. We commit to an immediate response – a same-day acknowledgement.

Of course, we commit to reporting all allegations to police immediately in cases of child sexual abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults

A dedicated and independent person will act as a 'support person' for complainants who come forward and need healing support, as well as provide updated information about the process going forward.

We are also initiating a review process of our historical records of all clergy – alive or who have died – that is independent of the Bishop's Office and Pastoral Center – that has qualified persons to carry out an investigative process.

I look forward to my own learning – and that of the overall diocese - from this process. In particular, the process will evaluate if past historical decisions were appropriate, and also what we can learn for future situations if and when they arise.

This process will also include an assessment of our record retention, and confirmation that all our records are maintained in a central, identifiable place, where everything pertinent is kept – including all information related to any possible allegations.

3. Training and ongoing education is another focus, and features the following:

All clergy, lay employees, and volunteers will have regular and up-to-date training regarding safe environment and safeguarding. This will include an appropriate 'Code of Conduct' – so that everyone who works in our churches is consistent when we are working with children, youth, and vulnerable people, such as home-bound seniors.

This will also mean that all clergy, employees, and volunteers will have a regular criminal record check.

Training also addresses what to watch for in terms of appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour.

Training will be clear about the obligation to report all serious misconduct – both in terms of civil obligations and church requirements. In all of this, full cooperation with the police and civil authorities will continue to be fully and clearly emphasized.

A key feature of training must address support for victims, including: crisis and trauma training for clergy, (and) diocesan employees who work with youth/ vulnerable people.

We will also be seeking some of our clergy and laity to be designated as persons trained in trauma support and accompaniment

4. Finally, and most important, is our outreach and commitment to support and healing for victims and survivors.

I, as bishop, invite victims to come forward. I repeat: I, as bishop, invite victims to come forward.

If persons would prefer to do this through another person, please contact one of our 'Intake Officers' designated for this. The contact information is on our website, or you can phone our diocesan center for the contact information (<https://rcdos.ca/Covenant-of-Care> or 306-242-1500).

Please join me in continuing to pray for all those have been hurt, for the damage that has been done to the Body of Christ, and for courage and ongoing conversion as we move forward to support victims and create safe and healthy communities of care and ministry.

Mary our Mother, pray for us.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.

Come Holy Spirit, bring life, healing, and conversion.

AMEN