



**Communications Office
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN**

1712 10th Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11215
718.499.9705 x636 • Fax: 718.499.2406

**CHILD VICTIMS ACT
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

What is the Child Victims Act?

The Child Victims Act (CVA) is a new law passed in New York State which significantly extends the statute of limitation for filing lawsuits over sexual abuse.

This new law lifts the statute of limitations for a one year period so child victims of sexual abuse can file civil lawsuits against individuals or public and private institutions regardless of when the alleged abuse occurred.

The window for these lawsuits opened on August 14, 2019 and ends on August 14, 2020.

What can the Diocese of Brooklyn expect starting on August 14, 2019?

The Diocese of Brooklyn does not know how many lawsuits it will face during the CVA window period. It is unclear if the diocese will have to declare bankruptcy as a result.

What is the IRCP?

The Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program was established in June 2017 as one way for the Diocese of Brooklyn to show a concrete expression of contrition and a desire to make amends. For victim-survivors, it can be one possible mechanism for healing in hopes of bringing them closure.

The IRCP is an independent compensation fund administered by Kenneth R. Feinberg, a highly regarded mediator, and his associate, Camille Biros. The goal of the Program is to help resolve claims alleging sexual abuse of a minor (less than 18 years of age) against members of the clergy of the Brooklyn Diocese. The administrators of the fund have complete autonomy to determine compensation for victims who come forward with a claim.

How many settlements have there been and where is the money coming from?

To date, the Diocese of Brooklyn has worked with about 500 victims and paid more than \$90 million dollars in settlements. The money has come from selling some properties and taking out mortgages on others. No parishioner funds are going to pay sex abuse settlements.

Can claims still be filed with the IRCP?

Allegations of sexual abuse should be called in to the Independent Reporting Line (888-634-4499). For anyone who wants information on what assistance is available to victims such as financial compensation, therapy referrals and pastoral resources, contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 718-623-5236 or vacministry@diobrook.org.

Beyond financial settlements, what else is offered to survivors of sexual abuse?

The Diocese of Brooklyn assists victim-survivors by connecting them to a community of survivors for support and advocacy. The Victim Assistance Ministry:

- Provides therapy for victim-survivors through independent licensed therapists (\$2.6 million since 2003)
- Offers various support groups for victim-survivors to help them go through the stages of healing with people who have walked in their shoes
- Organizes with a group of survivors a yearly Mass of Hope and Healing
- Arranges for Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio to meet with victim-survivors who request it

Click [here](#) for a video on the Victim Assistance Ministry.

How does the Diocese handle an allegation of abuse when it comes in?

Once an allegation of sexual abuse against a minor gets called in to the toll-free Reporting Line (888-634-4499) the Diocese of Brooklyn sends the report, irrespective of when the alleged abuse occurred, to the district attorney in Brooklyn or Queens.

If Law Enforcement declines prosecution, then the case/complaint is referred to the Diocesan Review Board when the claim refers to a member of the clergy. The information and evidence gathered by investigators is reviewed and deliberated by the board, which determines if the allegation is credible or not.

What does the Diocesan Review Board do?

The Diocesan Review Board assists the Bishop and the Diocese in determining and responding to allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. The Board will make a recommendation to the Bishop on the investigations it reviews.

The current board is composed of nine voting members. Joseph Esposito is the Chairperson of the Diocesan Review Board. Esposito is a retired NYPD Chief of Department and former Commissioner of the New York City Office of Emergency Management.

Board members include lawyers with experience in family law and child abuse, healthcare professionals, mental health professionals, a survivor of clergy abuse and a pastor.

Click [here](#) for a video on the Diocesan Review Board.

What steps does the Diocese of Brooklyn take to ensure the safety of all children?

Zero Tolerance

According to the Diocese of Brooklyn's Zero tolerance policy, any clergy member credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor is permanently removed from ministry.

Thorough Screening

The diocese thoroughly screens all members of the clergy (priests and deacons), as well as all employees and volunteers who work with children and young people as part of their ministry. Employees and volunteers must agree to initial and ongoing criminal background checks.

Code of Conduct

The diocese holds all members of the clergy, employees and volunteers who work with children and young people to Christ-centered and professional codes of conduct.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The diocese provides age-appropriate sexual abuse awareness training. 60,000 children are instructed every year in Child Lures Prevention. To date, 82,000 adults have been trained in over 3,200 Virtus Sessions.

Click [here](#) for a video on our sexual abuse awareness training programs.

What is the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People?

In 2002, the Catholic Bishops of the United States met in Dallas and pledged to address sexual abuse by clergy, lay employees and volunteers in the Catholic Church. They approved the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Dallas Charter), which is a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. It includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. Since 2002, the Bishops have revised the Charter twice and will continue to make changes as necessary.

How is compliance with the Charter monitored?

Since 2003 dioceses and eparchies throughout the United States have been audited yearly to determine if the diocese is implementing the practices required by the Charter. An Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter is prepared by the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection.

Is the Charter working?

Evidence to date shows the Dallas Charter has worked. The changes put in place by the Dallas Charter have produced the most aggressive policies in Child Protection.

The vast majority of sexual abuse by clergy happened between the 1960's and 1980's. Since 2002, when the Dallas Charter was enacted, there have been two credible cases involving active diocesan clergy. While even one case is too many, this shows the Diocese of Brooklyn is on the right path to prevent future sexual abuse and protect children.