

SEPTEMBER 2021

Report of the Independent Task Force

on the Response to Sexual Abuse within the
Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts



*“The Church’s aim will
be to hear, watch over,
protect, and care for
the abused, exploited,
and forgotten children,
wherever they are.”*

– Pope Francis

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Introductory letter

Dear Bishop Byrne,

On behalf of The Independent Task Force on the Response to Sexual Abuse within the Diocese of Springfield (“Task Force”), we are pleased to submit our final report and strategic plan. We believe these strategic initiatives and measurable objectives will improve the diocesan response to sexual abuse allegations and provide safety for all the faith community.

The Task Force took particular care to review critical information from two important sources — Judge Peter A. Velis (ret.), and the three western Massachusetts District Attorneys. Judge Velis documented in his report the *credible allegations* of sexual abuse against Bishop Weldon. The report’s insights helped shape our recommended restructuring of the *Review Board*. The expertise of our local law enforcement agencies, especially our three regional District Attorneys, proved invaluable in helping us clarify and define the appropriate roles of civil law and *canon law*.

Critical to our comprehensive process was to hear “the voices” of the survivors, the clergy, and the community.

We want to recognize the courage of those survivors who participated in several focus groups run by Stop It Now! This independent organization provided a safe environment for survivors to help us understand their pain, their trauma, the need for healing, and a path for going forward.

In addition, we want to applaud the 492 community members who responded to our survey. They helped us understand their concerns and frustrations, including the importance of transparency, accountability, and timeliness of response in dealing with allegations of sexual abuse.

We also want to thank all the clergy who openly shared their feelings of isolation, anxiety and frustration with the Church’s failed efforts to deal effectively with all the dimensions of this devastating blow to their ministry.

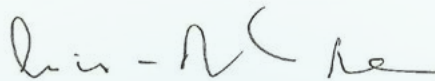
The Task Force recognizes that there is a great deal of work to be done to implement the broad range of responses and proactive efforts to prevent future abuse. We recommend the establishment of a Diocesan Advisory Committee to the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance to help implement continuous quality improvement (CQI) activities and ensure the successful completion of all the measurable objectives in this strategic plan by 2024.

Finally, we hope and pray that you will find that our recommended path forward will lead to reconciliation, healing, and safety for the faith community.

Respectfully,



Irene Woods, MSW, LICSW
Co-Chair



Orlando Isaza, MSW
Co-Chair

Section 1

Introduction

Beginning in February 2019, Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski held listening sessions⁷ throughout the Diocese of Springfield (“diocese”) about how the diocese had been addressing allegations of sexual abuse against clergy. Feedback provided by survivors of clergy sexual abuse, family members, advocates, parishioners, clergy, and other members of the community who were in attendance identified significant, long-term deficiencies in how the diocese responded to people who made reports of sexual abuse by representatives from the church. The sessions also emphasized ongoing issues with how the diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection worked with survivors, family members, and the community-at-large. “Re-traumatization” and “re-victimization” while interacting with the diocese and its representatives was a major theme that emerged from the listening sessions.

The diocese has deep sorrow for the pain and suffering of all those affected by sexual abuse committed by trusted members of the clergy. This included those holding positions of authority who participated in the abuse and the ongoing inaction and lack of accountability by church leaders. Often, when survivors first came forward to courageously report their abuse, the response of church leaders added to and intensified the experience of trauma and being victimized. As a result of these listening sessions, the diocese recognized the need for substantial action to improve its response to sexual abuse and to prevent any future victimization of any person within the community.

In response to the listening sessions, the first action step completed by the diocese was to restructure the Office of Child and Youth Protection (OCYP). In June 2019, the OCYP was renamed the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance (OSEVA) and Jeffrey J. Trant was hired as its director. Secondly, the OSEVA recommended to the bishop that he appoint an independent, outside investigator to review how the diocese handled an unresolved allegation against deceased Bishop Christopher J. Weldon in the 1960s. The allegation was first reported to the diocese in 2014. In July 2019, retired Massachusetts Superior Court Judge Peter A. Velis was retained to conduct the investigation.

To better understand and address the deficiencies and problems identified at the listening sessions, and to find ways to remedy past mistakes and avoid future issues, the OSEVA determined that a strategic plan was needed to forge a blueprint for immediate and future reforms.

To undertake the strategic planning process, a diverse task force of representatives from key stakeholder groups, both within the diocese and in the broader western Massachusetts community, was appointed. This group was to represent the broader community including: survivors of clergy sexual abuse; professionals with expertise in behavioral health, trauma-

informed care, child protection, and sexual abuse prevention; legal experts with prosecutorial and judicial backgrounds; educators; human service professionals with backgrounds in child and youth serving organizations; and Roman Catholic priests and women religious. The task force was also to include members of other faith traditions.

[Ten 10 members were appointed](#) by Bishop Rozanski to the Independent Task Force (Task Force), which convened in 2020. This working group was charged with developing a strategic plan with specific steps for improvement. The bishop instructed the task force to recommend actions that could be undertaken immediately when possible. However, he also recognized that the complexity of historical and systemic problems would require the development and implementation of a long-term strategy. He appointed the following talented and diverse individuals to accomplish both these objectives:

CHAIRPERSON

Daniel Ford, J.D., Esquire, Retired Massachusetts Superior Court Judge, former First Assistant District Attorney, Berkshire District Attorney’s Office, and of counsel to Cain, Hibbard, Meyers and Cook. *(In May of 2021, Daniel Ford resigned as chair of the Task Force acknowledging the appearance of a possible conflict of interest. At the June meeting of the Task Force, Irene Woods and Orlando Isaza were elected the new co-chairs of the Task Force and appointed by Bishop Byrne.)*

VICE CHAIRPERSON

Irene Woods, MSW, LICSW, Executive Director, Children’s Advocacy Center of Franklin County and the North Quabbin and retired Investigative Unit Supervisor, Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

MEMBERS

Orlando Isaza, MSW, Retired, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, Holyoke Community College, Smith College School for Social Work, and the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Ronald Johnson, MA, President/Chief Executive Officer, Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Services

Reverend Michael Pierz, JCL, Pastor, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Agawam

Sister Mary Quinn, SSJ, D. Min., LMHC, LMFT, Program Coordinator of Out of County Reentry Programs, Western Massachusetts Regional Women’s Correctional Center, and Sister of St. Joseph of Springfield

James Stankiewicz, M.Ed., Retired Superintendent, Central Berkshire Regional School District and Retired Headmaster, St. Agnes Academy; Interim Chairperson, Diocesan Review Board

Joan Tabachnick, MBA, Fellow, Department of Justice SMART Office and Executive Director, MASOC *(Joan Tabachnick was unable to continue when the Task Force extended past the original 100 day timeframe and resigned at that time.)*

⁷ The listening sessions were held on February 6, 2019 at Mary, Mother of Hope Church in Springfield; February 10, 2019 at St. Joseph Church in Pittsfield; February 27, 2019 at St. Joseph Parish in Shelburne Falls; March 18, 2021 at St. Mary Parish in Westfield; and March 24, 2019 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Northampton.

Reverend William Tourigny, M.Div., Pastor, St. Rose de Lima Parish, Chicopee

Amber Zinni, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW, Trauma Therapist, Trauma Institute and Child Trauma Institute

CONSULTANTS

Maurice Boisvert, MA, MSW, President/Chief Executive Officer Emeritus, Y.O.U., Inc. and Adjunct Professor, Boston College School of Social Work

Sharon W. Doty, MHR, JD, Consultant to the *VIRTUS*® Programs and Founder, Keeping Them Safe

STAFF

Jeffrey Trant, MSW, CAGS, LCSW, CPRP, Director, Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance, Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield

Declarations of Potential Conflicts Task Force Members

The members of the Independent Task Force declare the following in order to disclose any and all circumstances that could give rise to a personal or professional conflict of interest with regard to the mission of the Task Force. The relationships acknowledged here have been known and public since the members began serving. No Task Force members have gained financially from their participation in this project and no interest declared here has impacted the objectivity of the members.

DECLARATIONS

Rev. Michael Pierz declares that he is an incardinated priest of the Diocese of Springfield; as a pastor, he has previously received legal counsel from Egan, Flanagan & Cohen, P.C.

Sister Mary Quinn declares in her prior capacity as president of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, she has previously received legal counsel from Egan, Flanagan & Cohen, P.C.

James Stankiewicz declares that his wife is employed as director of faith formation at St. Agnes Parish.

Rev. William Tourigny declares he is an incardinated priest of the Diocese of Springfield; as a pastor, he has previously received legal counsel from Egan, Flanagan & Cohen, P.C.

Irene Woods declares that Jeffrey Trant of the Diocese of Springfield serves on the board of directors of the Children's Advocacy Center of Franklin County and the North Quabbin where she is executive director.

Amber Zinni declares she was employed by the Trauma Institute & Child Trauma Institute (TI&CTI) until June 2021; the Diocese of Springfield has previously purchased behavioral health services from TI&CTI.

DEFINITIONS

These definitions are provided to assist readers in understanding certain terms used throughout the report. These terms may be found in “italics” where they appear in the report.

Canon Law: The term used to describe the governance of the Catholic Church.

Cleric: One who is constituted in sacred ministry in the Church; *clerics* are deacons, priests and bishops.

Credible Allegation: An allegation is determined to be *credible* if it is not manifestly false and there is reasonable cause to believe that the sexual abuse occurred.

Dallas Norms: The “Essential Norms” are “particular” *canon law* for the bishops in the United States and are most commonly referred to as the “Dallas Norms.” They were approved by the Vatican in response to the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* originally adopted by a meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002. The Dallas (Essential) Norms can be found on the USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection website.

Diocese: A particular Church entrusted to the responsibility of a bishop usually established by territory within the Catholic Church.

Diocesan Review Board: A panel of people that functions as a consultative body to the bishop/eparch. The board offers advice to the bishop/eparch to help him assess allegations of sexual abuse of minors, and to determine a *cleric's* suitability for ministry.

Global Settlement: Settlements resolve civil lawsuits. *Global settlements* occur when a defendant, usually a *diocese* or corporation, must settle claims with multiple plaintiffs.

Sexual Abuse of a Minor: Any interaction between an adult and a child (under the age of 18) in which the child is used for sexual pleasure, stimulation, or sexual gratification of the perpetrator or observer. Sexual abuse can include both touching and non-touching behavior. This includes the manufacture, distribution and viewing of child pornography.

VIRTUS: The brand name that identifies best practices programs designed to empower organizations and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the church. *VIRTUS* is commonly used to refer to the *Protecting God's Children® for Adults* program to prevent child sexual abuse. *Protecting God's Children® for Adults* educates adults in creating and maintaining safe environments and protects children and vulnerable adults from sexual abuse by focusing on raising awareness about potentially risky adult behaviors and ways to intervene to interrupt possible grooming.

Section 2

Identifying 6 Strategic Initiatives

The Task Force was asked to create strategies and measurable objectives that would establish policies, procedures, protocols, and/or programs.

The Task Force began their deliberations with the understanding that both objectives be achieved: developing a comprehensive strategic plan to be implemented over several years and, at the same time, identifying and taking action on items that could be impacted immediately. As a result, some initiatives have already been accomplished and some others are currently being implemented. (See: [Section 6, Implementation Strategy for a list of those projects.](#)) The Task Force also committed to hearing “the voices” of the various key informants and stakeholder groups in the community in order to develop a strategic plan.

The Task Force was asked to bring their expertise and knowledge to a discussion of how the *diocese* could focus its resources through strategies to improve its response to allegations of sexual abuse of children and create a safe environment for the future. The result of that lengthy and robust process was the identification of the following 6 Strategic Initiatives:

- 1. The *diocese* will acknowledge the trauma of sexual abuse on members of our community and ensure the allocation of resources needed to promote healing of survivors and the faith community.**
- 2. The *diocese* will respond to all allegations of sexual abuse in our church community in a timely, compassionate and fair way.**
- 3. The *diocese* will ensure a transparent system of protocols and procedures that guarantee respect and due process for all involved.**
- 4. The *diocese* will ensure that the local church leadership is held responsible and accountable for failing to protect children and other vulnerable persons.**
- 5. The *diocese* will hold those who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse responsible and accountable.**
- 6. The *diocese* will establish programs designed to prevent sexual abuse of anyone in our faith communities in the future.**

Section 3

Listening to the Voices of the Key Informants and Stakeholders

In order to fulfill the mission and mandate of the Task Force, it became clear that there was a need to hear from the various groups that were and are impacted by this situation. The Task Force identified one key informant and four groups of stakeholders with a particular interest in this matter. Then the Task Force created a plan for engaging with each group to hear what they had to say in order to identify the weaknesses in the diocesan response and the opportunities for improvement in dealing with these issues. The information gathered from the responses would be relied on to determine the elements necessary for a workable plan for a new future for the *diocese* in this area. The key informant and stakeholder groups are the:

KEY INFORMANT

- [Velis Report](#)

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

- [Victims/Survivors](#)
- [District Attorneys/Law Enforcement](#)
- [Faith Community and the Community at Large](#)
- [Clergy](#)

An overview of the information and recommendations gleaned from engaging with these five groups is necessary to any discussion of the work of the Task Force and the recommendations included in the proposed Strategic Initiatives. The discussion provided here is intended as an overview and summary of what was discovered in this process. The entire report from the engagement with each stakeholder group is available on the diocesan website and in the link included at the end of this document. (See: [Section 8, Source Documents](#))

I. Velis Report

The Task Force had an opportunity to review the [Velis Report](#) investigating the specific allegations against Bishop Christopher J. Weldon. For purposes of the Task Force, the report examined the relevant policies and procedures regarding what happened to the specific allegations that were brought forward and looked for gaps and inequities in the process. The Velis Report also made recommendations for changes to that process to bring transparency and accountability to handling allegations.

The [Velis Report](#) was prepared by Judge Peter A. Velis (Ret.). Judge Velis was retained by the Diocese of Springfield to conduct an independent, outside investigation to review how

the *diocese* handled an unresolved allegation against deceased Bishop Christopher J. Weldon in the 1960s. The allegation was first reported to the *diocese* in 2014. The purpose and scope of that investigation included an assessment of the unresolved allegations to determine their credibility, an analysis of the processing of the complaint by diocesan personnel, and the system in place for handling these allegations. Velis also was asked to assist in identifying ways to improve the diocesan response to allegations of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults by clergy and other church personnel.

After an intensive and in-depth investigation, the [Velis Report](#) reached the conclusion that the allegations against Bishop Weldon were “unequivocally *credible*” (Page 6 of [Velis Report](#)) Bishop Weldon was deceased at the time of this finding. His name now appears on the [diocesan website](#) for those credibly accused of *sexual abuse of a minor* (See: Section 7, Appendix D). During the investigation, a number of gaps in the process were identified and recommendations made by the Velis team for changes in the processes used by the Diocese of Springfield for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse that are brought forward to the *diocese*.

Some important recommendations of the [Velis Report](#) that informed the work of the Task Force were that the *diocese*:

- Develop and implement a new system for reporting, investigating and reviewing allegations of sexual abuse of minors, current and historical.

- Focus new processes and systems on transparency and accountability in word and in action.

- Develop and adopt new policies, procedures, and protocols in strict adherence to and compliance with the particular law of the church as implemented by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (“*Dallas Norms*”) and the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

- *Include a new Code of Conduct for clergy and all other diocesan employees and volunteers that include a system of checks and balances designed to ensure compliance and a safe environment for all.*

- *Establish new policies and procedures for handling all allegations of inappropriate interactions between clergy, staff, and volunteers and the children and vulnerable adults they minister to and work with.*

- Establish a written protocol for handling allegations against order priests and women religious.

- Empower each diocesan employee as a mandated reporter and provide the appropriate training and development to ensure they are prepared to report any allegation.

- Create a team of independent investigators to oversee investigations of allegations and preserve all documentation and relevant information.

- Ensure that every allegation is responded to in a timely and professional manner and identify a person outside the diocesan staff to monitor and oversee this happening. This person should be identified by the director of the OSEVA and be appointed by the bishop.

- Reorganize the *Review Board* and establish new procedures for investigating allegations.

- *Investigators should be confined to relevant fact gathering and discovery.*

- *Investigators should present their work product to the Review Board in a final, signed and dated report including supportive data.*

- Engage independent adjunct legal counsel for the OSEVA.

- Provide access to the diocesan policies, procedures, and other documents that articulate the *diocese’s* expectations of clergy, staff, and volunteers.

Most of the recommendations of the [Velis Report](#) are included in the Strategic Initiatives. Some of the recommendations have already been adopted and new processes are in place. For example, there is an entirely new structure for the *Review Board*. As a result, a new board is being assembled.

The Task Force adopted a new procedure for conducting investigations independent from the *Review Board* and established a process for the *Review Board* to consider the allegations and make recommendations to the bishop:

- Immediate response to allegations by the director of the OSEVA.

- Referral of all allegations — current and historical — to the appropriate law enforcement or child protection agency for initial investigation as to the availability of criminal charges.

- Internal investigation by independent investigators (2 for each case) through the OSEVA.

- Written and oral reports to the *Review Board* upon the completion of an investigation that includes a summary of the interviews, documents, and other evidence along with copies of all the information gathered.

- The *Review Board*:

- Advises the bishop in the assessment of allegations of the sexual abuse of minors and determines the suitability of the accused for ministry.
- Reviews diocesan policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors/vulnerable adults; and
- Offers advice on all aspects of these cases retrospectively or prospectively.

- **Regular periodic updates to complainants regarding the status of the investigation and the progress to resolution.**

The new *Review Board* make-up will include representatives from different relevant groups in the community, Catholics and members of other faith communities, law enforcement, social work, survivors, and survivor families as well as others from the professional community with expertise in dealing with these issues. Recommendations for potential appointees are being identified consistent with the new procedures developed by the Task Force and adopted by the bishop. The new investigative team is already in place and at work. The new *Review Board* will be in place and fully functional within a short period of time.

A [new policy for all clergy, staff, and volunteers regarding reporting current and historical allegations to civil authorities](#) was approved by the bishop in April of 2021 and training has begun across the *diocese*. All clergy, staff, and volunteers are in the process of being trained and provided a wallet-sized card that outlines the step-by-step procedure for reporting all allegations.

In addition, an initial draft of a new Code of Conduct is being reviewed and the revised policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults are being drafted.

Other recommendations from the [Velis Report](#) that are relevant to the mandate of the Task Force are addressed in the Strategic Initiatives (See: Section 8, Source Document #1).

II. Victims/Survivors

The first stakeholder group that was part of the Task Force research of the issue is a group of victims/survivors who agreed to be part of this process. It was determined by the Task Force that the most effective and safe way to include survivors was to give them an opportunity to share in a therapeutic environment where they could speak freely and be assured that there was professional support available at all times. Focus groups seemed to be the best way to achieve this objective in a way that maintained personal safety and fostered meaningful participation.

Once the process for engaging the survivors was decided, it was important to ensure that the participants were as comfortable with the process. Therefore, the Task Force contracted [Stop It Now!](#), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing child

sexual abuse, to conduct the focus groups. Stop It Now! recruited and worked with survivors of sexual abuse by clergy in the Springfield area to give them an opportunity to contribute to this process and be heard by the Task Force.

One of the most important recommendations in the findings from the Stop it Now! team is that a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive lens be applied to every action taken by the *diocese* as it moves forward. The Task Force learned that “trauma-informed and trauma-responsive” means understanding at every level of the response “the role that violence and victimization play in the lives of [those seeking services] and to use that understanding to design service systems [sensitive to] trauma survivors and allow services to be delivered in a way that will facilitate consumer participation in treatment.”²

The [Stop it Now! Report](#) identified the following elements that should be included in a trauma-informed response:

- Believe a person reporting sexual abuse and believe the impact they describe. Remember that very few intentionally lie about being sexually molested as children and that almost half of all victims of child sexual abuse never report until they are adults — if at all.³
- Listen and pay attention to the filters you are listening through. Avoid bias and preconceived notions of what someone needs in the way of support or accountability.
- View every public pronouncement through the lens of trauma. Be sure that nothing the *diocese* says has the effect or the unintended consequence of dismissing the experience or needs of those who were abused.
- Stay in communication with those who have come forward. Let them know what actions are being taken to address their concerns. Check in with them regularly and make them aware of the steps being taken to ensure the safety of others.
- Respond carefully and in ways that ensure that no one who experienced abuse feels blame, guilt, being diminished, or that they were accountable in any way.

In its findings, the Stop is Now! team reminded the *diocese* of the difficulty it faces in turning the tide of the church’s response history with survivors:

It is the responsibility of the authority figures, especially those representing an institution that has hurt survivors and not addressed it, to demonstrate that they are safe and trustworthy. This must occur repeatedly over time. Harm happens in the context of relationships, so it is through building trusting relationships that healing can happen. This will be difficult and time consuming and the Church should expect that (Page 35 of Stop it Now! Report).

² Harris, M., & Fallot, R. D. (2001). *Envisioning a trauma-informed service system: a vital paradigm shift. New directions for mental health services, 2001(89), 3-22.*

³ McElvaney, R. (2015). *Disclosure of child sexual abuse: Delays, non-disclosure and partial disclosure. What the research tells us and implications for practice. Child Abuse Review, 24(3), 159-169.*

Other findings in the study include:

- The importance of involving the entire church community in both prevention and healing efforts. Accountability for creating safe environments and promoting healing of those harmed lies with the entire community. Prevention education that promotes a pro-active approach, education of adults and children about child sexual abuse, and training all adults in how to recognize possible signs of abuse and report to appropriate authorities are critical to creating a future that ensures safety, healing, and restoration of trust.
- Offer compassionate, genuine, professional resources to clergy who might be in danger of violating any sexual boundaries and particularly those who feel attracted to children. Provide training on appropriate boundaries and a non-threatening pathway to support for any member of the clergy in need of help.
- Demonstrate accountability. Many, if not most, of the participants reported that the emotional trauma experienced in the betrayal at the hands of church leadership was more damaging than the sexual abuse. Acknowledging the harm was important to survivors, but more important to them was the church taking responsibility for the “legacy of harm” (Page 41 of Stop it Now! Report) suffered by the survivors. One apology or settlement is not enough. One survivor also recommended that a synod be convened to address this issue.
- Report all allegations to civil authorities for investigation first. Whether the allegations are current or historical, let the civil process move forward before the church starts to investigate.
- Transparency, communication, and follow-through are essential. Rebuilding trust cannot happen if these three elements are missing in any actions taken by the *diocese*. Even saying “I don’t know” or “I can’t promise that” when appropriate is better than providing information that is misleading or wrong.
- Measure the success of diocesan efforts over time by the increase in the levels of trust, safety, and dignity experienced by survivors, others who were harmed by the *diocese’s* action or inaction, and the larger faith community.
- Use available resources to establish new policies and procedures that are consistent with best practices for youth-serving organizations.
- Establish a standing committee, primarily made up of professionals and lay people, to provide advice and

oversight to the director of the OSEVA.

- Make sure that policies, procedures, codes of conduct, and other institutional policies dealing with this issue are available for public review and are updated regularly.
- Ensure that all information needed by someone making a report regarding how to go about bringing forth the allegation in a way that maintains personal safety and preserves their rights and dignity is readily available online and in written form at the parish level. Include clear information about what someone making a report can expect along the way.
- Expand the screening of clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Develop model policies for local parishes for dealing with members of their congregations with a history of being accused or convicted of sexual offenses.
- Educate the church community about normal, healthy sexual development.
- Establish and publish a Code of Conduct for clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Develop policies that promote safety in any one-on-one interactions between adults and youth and, whenever possible, eliminate these situations.

There is much more to be learned from the survivors who choose to be part of these initial focus groups. Their thoughts, ideas, and experiences should inform much of what will happen going forward from this report. Further, this was the first systematic effort undertaken by the *diocese* inviting survivors to provide input. The *diocese* recognizes that survivors may not feel safe at this time participating in conversation about their trauma histories and may be mistrustful of the *diocese’s* motivations for inviting them to share input in a planning process. Providing regular and ongoing opportunities for dialogue and input as the *diocese* follows through with recommended reforms is an important next step.

Developing and implementing the Strategic Initiatives through a trauma-informed and trauma-response lens will make a substantial difference in how the *diocese* is able to begin to rebuild trust and establish a new environment that is safe for all God’s children. This will require ongoing, thoughtful consideration of every action taken setting the principles of trauma-informed and trauma-response as the standard.

For the complete report of Stop It Now! see Section 8, Source Document #3.

III. District Attorneys/Law Enforcement

In 2002, when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) (See: Section 7, Appendix E) and the *Dallas Norms* were approved, *dioceses* agreed to defer to civil authorities until law enforcement has had the opportunity to complete its investigations. These provisions of the charter have met with some challenges in practice.

The Diocese of Springfield failed to fully comply with the charter. The “listening sessions” in early 2019 revealed a great deal of information about the gaps between what the *diocese* was saying about its practices and the reality of the actions being taken became apparent. An agreement between the *diocese* and the local district attorneys was necessary to resolve old issues and create a framework for moving forward.

The director of the OSEVA collaborated with representatives from the three regional district attorneys in the geographic area of the *diocese* to develop a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to resolve the issue regarding how future allegations would be handled by all parties. The purpose was to ensure that nothing is done to compromise a possible criminal case and that the allegations are viewed by an independent, law enforcement professional as soon as the *diocese* becomes aware of the complaint.

After months of discussion and negotiation, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) was entered into between the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield and the offices of the district attorneys of the Berkshire, Hampden, and Northwestern Districts. The relevant components of the Memorandum of Understanding are:

- All reports of allegations of *sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult* that the *diocese* becomes aware of are referred immediately to the appropriate district attorney.
- The *diocese* and its clergy, staff, and volunteers will comply with all mandated reporting laws in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- The *diocese* will suspend its investigation of such cases for up to 90 days after the allegation is reported.
- The *diocese* will continue its practice of neither imposing nor seeking to impose a confidentiality agreement on any complainant and to encourage anyone with an allegation to take it directly to civil authorities for investigation.

This [Memorandum of Understanding](#) was signed by all parties on April 28, 2020 and is in effect until June 30, 2024 unless modified by agreement of all the parties and is renewable at that time. It is the agreement that governs the relationship between the *diocese* and the district attorneys in this geographic area for dealing with both current and

historical allegations of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults by clergy, staff, and volunteers of the *diocese*.

Representatives of the Task Force met with the Hampden, Northwestern and Berkshire district attorneys and representatives from their staffs. The district attorneys collectively reported a significant improvement in working with the *diocese* since the development of the [MOU](#) and, based upon the information available to them, are very satisfied with its implementation during the first year of the agreement.

For the complete Memorandum of Understanding see Section 7, Appendix A.

IV. Faith Community

For purposes of hearing from the stakeholders, a series of statements were developed from the Strategic Initiatives in order to provide the Task Force with a “baseline” for understanding perceptions of where the *diocese* is currently as it relates to several elements of this issue. The areas that were presented to the stakeholders to seek their opinions regarding the performance of the *diocese* in dealing with these issues were:

- Has the *diocese* acknowledged the trauma of sexual abuse on members of our community and ensured the allocation of resources needed to promote healing of survivors?
- Has the *diocese* responded to all allegations of sexual abuse in our church community in a timely, compassionate and fair way?
- Does the *diocese* have a transparent system of protocols and procedures to responding to allegations of sexual abuse that guarantees response and due process for all involved?
- Has the *diocese* ensured that local church leadership is held responsible and accountable for failing to protect children and other vulnerable adults?
- Has the *diocese* held those who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse responsible and accountable?
- Does the *diocese* have an effective program for preventing sexual abuse of anyone in our faith communities in the future?

These questions were the basis of a diocesan wide online survey of the faith community. The survey was widely promoted and encouraged. Parishioners had two weeks to respond with their assessment of the performance of the *diocese* in these areas and to provide any comments, concerns, or recommendations to the Task Force. The survey was

announced and forms were published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese and Vietnamese languages.

There were 492 responses from the community and [the results of the survey](#) can be read in its entirety on the diocesan website (**See: Section 8, Source Document #2**). For purposes of this report, there are specific themes evident throughout the responses from the faith community. They include:

- The need for relevant transparency and communication that is effective, clear and as thorough as possible and a greater understanding of what is meant by “allocation of resources needed.”
 - *Need for the diocese to be accountable to the faith community — not just seek their donations.*
 - *Need the diocese to stop “deflecting” the issue and create a clear communication plan to keep the public informed regarding what is happening to deal with these situations.*
 - *Use public resources to communicate, be consistent in your message, avoid misinformation and correct errors quickly.*
 - *Make sure the people dealing with the issue for the diocese are competent to do so.*
 - *Don’t just talk — take action.*
- Acknowledge the trauma endured by everyone involved.
 - *Take care of the victims AND their families.*
 - *Realize that the faith community is also traumatized and provide a pathway to healing for them.*
 - *Support the clergy who are reeling from the impact of the allegations against their brother priests.*
 - *Attend to the spiritual needs of the family of the accused as well.*
- Deal with the issues raised by the Velis Report.
- Always respond in a timely manner.
- Create a new culture that identifies the church as a “safe place” for all.
- Do whatever it takes to rebuild trust.
- Bring closure to unresolved historical issues. (*Most did not know how to have this happen but this theme is*

evident throughout all stakeholder responses. There are historical events that have not been fully addressed in a way that allows for closure. This may never happen for some but a plan to address these issues in some way is important to all the stakeholders.)

- Engage lay people in oversight.
 - Provide public access to the list of priests credibly accused of sexual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult.
 - Provide public access to a list of all who have been trained in the *VIRTUS* Program — including clergy, staff, and volunteers.
 - Find a way to talk with the faith community about the difference between the civil/criminal response to allegations, the response guided by *canon law*, and a pastoral response to the situation.
 - Re-implement the *VIRTUS* program and educate everyone.
 - Review and reconstitute the child advocacy system in a way that actually provides support and guidance for those in that ministry locally.
 - Sponsor public acts of healing and atonement.
 - Expect authentic leadership from those in positions of responsibility.
 - Eliminate misinformation.
 - Understand the breadth of trauma on individuals and communities.
 - Be proactive rather than reactive.
- These themes were present in virtually all the responses from the survey of the faith community. In addition, there were comments and recommendations regarding matters that are not part of the mandate of the Task Force, however, they warrant mention as they provide the *diocese* with some idea of what’s missing and needed in the faith/spiritual development of the faithful.
- Education of clergy and adults, teens, and children in the faith community on human sexuality.
 - Provide spiritual and emotional support to clergy.
 - Reevaluate how young men are recruited and prepared for seminary training and carefully consider the training they are getting to ensure that they have what they need to serve the people.

The faith community is asking for the same things other stakeholders seek. They want to be heard. They want communication and transparency. They want the victims/survivors cared for — and that means all the victims/survivors. They want the *diocese* to put an end to this issue once and for all and to begin to focus on creating a new culture that promotes a safe, secure, environment for all God’s children — children, vulnerable adults, and the people who minister to them.

V. Clergy

The final stakeholder group was [interviewed one-on-one](#) by independent professional staff (**See: Section 8, Source Document #4**). The same series of statements developed by the Task Force for the survey of the faith community served as the questions posed to the clergy for their consideration.

Offering the clergy the opportunity to respond one-on-one through personal interviews proved to be a highly effective way to allow the members of the presbyterate to be heard and to experience being listened to. The response was extraordinary. Sixty-five percent (65%) of all priests who could be reached by phone were interviewed and only fifteen percent (15%) declined to be interviewed. The comments and recommendations of the clergy were, in many ways, consistent with those of the faith community and in other ways quite different. The clergy have a unique view of the situation as they have been directly impacted in ways beyond that of the general faith community. In addition, the fact that they wear a Roman collar means they are always a potential target for public response to the crisis.

They see both positive signs for the future and repeated behaviors or reinforcement of old behaviors that keep the “way it has always been” in place. Among the general themes present throughout the responses from clergy were:

- Encouragement about the direction the *diocese* is going and, in particular, the new staff of the OSEVA
- Hope that the new bishop will be able to bring resolution to this issue for all concerned
- Their experience of being on the outside looking in as relates to dealing with these issues and the experience of being victimized by the situation. For example, most feel as if they are left to deal with the issue with their own people in their own parishes without much support from the *diocese*.
- Top leadership can get away with things other priests cannot and they are not held accountable for their behavior in the same way that a parish priest would be. They also are concerned that some parts of the Velis Report were ignored because of favoritism.

- The experience of being alone and that the “brotherhood of priests” that they joined at ordination no longer exists. They feel their *clerical* family is fractured in a way, and they are really hungry for a return to that collegiality.

- Communication and transparency are keys to a future where this issue is dealt with in such a way that it is no longer an issue.

- *Including dealing with unresolved historical issues in a way that lays them to rest as ongoing public conversations.*

- *Tell priests and parishes what is happening when a priest is removed — or at least let everyone know when the removal is not related to allegations of abuse of a child or vulnerable adult.*

- Trauma is present for all involved and needs to be addressed compassionately and pastorally for victims and their family, the entire faith community, the clergy, and the families of the accused.

- *VIRTUS* is the right program for the possibility of prevention and it needs a fresh start — right from the beginning.

- Being thwarted from doing their job: calling people to Jesus and the life God wants for all.

The survey responses are available online. In addition, there is an [executive summary of the clergy survey](#) provided to the Task Force by the team who conducted the survey in the attachments.

It is important to note that, as with the faith community survey, other issues became apparent during the interview. Among those matters that are not directly related to the issues of the sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults, they are crucial to the health and well-being of the presbyterate. Among those ancillary issues are:

- The mental, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of the clergy as they are dealing with a number of major, life-altering issues.

- The lack of socialization and the isolation of COVID-19.

- The experience that clergy are victims of PTSD and suffering from trauma reactions.

For most it was the first time that anyone has asked the clergy about these issues or even talked with them about the situation. They want things to be better. They want these issues off the front page of the papers. They want all parishes actively

engaged in creating a new standard for protecting children and creating safe environments.

The clergy are anxious for the Task Force recommendations to become available for everyone to see. They also want accountability and transparency in the formal adoption of those recommendations and the ongoing implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

Section 4

What the Task Force Learned

As indicated earlier, the Task Force employed a variety of methods and tools to obtain input from the stakeholder groups and learned a great deal from our process. We are grateful for the large number of stakeholders who took the time and made the effort to share their thoughts with us.

Transparency and openness on the part of the *diocese* were overarching themes for all stakeholder groups. One demonstration of transparency is to publish names of all credibly accused clergy and notify parishioners in each community where they have served.⁴ This has now been accomplished. Survivors, clergy, parishioners, law enforcement, and the [Velis Report](#) agree that transparency and communication are fundamental to creating a new experience of victims/survivors and seriously lacking in the historical response to this issue by the *diocese*.

For example, the Task Force learned that a significant number of the “people in the pews” are disillusioned by the *diocese*’s failure to communicate fully and accurately about the issue of clergy sexual abuse. We also learned that among survivors this lack of transparency and timeliness was aggravated by the absence of a trauma-informed response to their complaints. In fact, many survivors said that the experience of having to deal with the *diocese* was more damaging to them than the actual sexual abuse.

A constant refrain expressed by parishioners, survivors, and the law enforcement community was that allegations of clergy sexual abuse should be investigated initially by the police, the district attorneys, and other civil authorities, and not solely by the *diocese*. As noted earlier, the *diocese* entered into a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) with the three district attorneys with jurisdiction in the four counties of western Massachusetts, reflecting the concern of many respondents to the survey that child sexual abuse is not only a mortal sin but a serious and reprehensible crime. The district attorneys reported to the Task Force that they are starting to see a positive shift in the *diocese*’s performance of its obligations under the [MOU](#).

Although all current and historical allegations of *sexual abuse of a minor* or vulnerable adult are now referred immediately to the district attorneys for initial investigation, once that process

is completed, the *diocese* must conduct its own investigation in accordance with *Canon Law*. Regardless of the outcome of a civil investigation, the *diocese* may conduct an inquiry of its own. The *diocese* cannot risk returning an offender to ministry and placing others in harm’s way.

The Task Force learned that these internal investigations were not previously conducted in accordance with best practices. The new Policies and Procedures for the *Review Board*, approved by the Task Force and adopted by the bishop, have completely reorganized this process. Four highly qualified professionals are now responsible for the investigative process. The *Review Board* is now tasked with assessment of credibility of the accusations and recommendations for suitability of ministry to the bishop.

The Task Force also learned from the stakeholders that diocesan response to allegations has improved dramatically since the current director of the OSEVA arrived on the scene in 2019. Stakeholders agree that the OSEVA office is headed in the right direction.

The Task Force learned that the resources needed to fully support the work of the OSEVA are yet to be determined. Budget recommendations will be forthcoming from the office once the final draft of the Strategic Plan is promulgated and there is clarity about what is needed to complete these tasks.

The Task Force learned that the policies and procedures for addressing claims of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults have not been effectively updated since 2003. Furthermore, the mandated reporter policy of the *diocese* was insufficient and resulted in ambiguity and inconsistency in the actions of clergy, staff, and volunteers. The policies and procedures are being revised as of the writing of this report and a new [Mandated Report Policy](#) has been adopted by the bishop and was rolled out to clergy in the month of May 2021.

The Task Force learned that as part of a previous *global settlement*, some survivors were promised lifetime counseling at diocesan expense and no guidelines were established by the *diocese* for this unlimited support.

The Task Force learned that as part of the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2002, new *Dallas Norms* were approved for the United States Catholic Church by the Vatican. It is now the law of the church that each *diocese* and eparch is required to establish a *review board* to advise “the diocesan bishop/eparch in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry,” and review “diocesan/eparchial policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors.” We learned that this *review board* should be composed of at least five members who are “in full communion with the Church,” that at least one member should be a priest who is an “experienced and respected pastor of the *diocese*,” and that at least one member should be a person who has “particular expertise in the treatment of the sexual abuse of minors.”

⁴ On June 2, 2021, the Diocese of Springfield published a new list of persons with a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor that may be accessed at: <http://diospringfield.org/osevacrediblyaccused/>

The Task Force learned how *global settlements* with abuse victims were reached in 2004 and 2008. They also learned that priests, who were removed from ministry and not convicted criminally or canonically due to a lack of evidence or expiration of a statute of limitations, are still receiving minimal financial support from the *diocese* consistent with *canon law*. Sustainance from the *diocese* allows for continued monitoring and oversight which is not possible if these particular priests are removed from the *clerical* state (laicized).

The Task Force learned that the morale of the presbyterate is at an all-time low. Priests reported feeling demoralized, disempowered, and under siege in their ministry, and expressed regret that the toxic atmosphere has made it difficult for them to engage in pastoral ministry with young people, such as altar servers and children in schools. Priests report feeling excluded from the process and are unaware about what is happening in the *diocese* regarding these issues. At the same time, their experience is that they are taking the brunt of the reactions from parishioners and the public.

The Task Force also learned the following in the survey responses of the clergy:

- They felt as though there is very little or no “due process” for clergy.
- There are concerns that the families of credibly accused priests are left to deal with their trauma without any support from the church.
- They are experiencing a loss of solidarity and sense of community among the priests.

The Task Force learned that virtually everyone who was part of the groups surveyed supports the *VIRTUS* Protecting God’s Children child sexual abuse prevention program and, at the same time, virtually everyone is clear that the program was never implemented fully or properly. The consensus among all stakeholders is that a complete re-launch of the program is necessary for the entire community to experience the benefits of the program. The Task Force also learned that current child advocates have had inadequate or no training, no professional development, and virtually no support.

The Task Force heard presentations from recognized experts on the subject of prevention, including Joan Tabachnick, fellow at the Department of Justice SMART Office and executive director of MASOC, for a World Free of Sexual Harm by Youth; Suzin Bartley, executive director of the Massachusetts Children’s Trust and co-chair of the Massachusetts Legislative Task Force on the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse; Dr. Anthony Rizzuto, consultant to the Massachusetts Children’s Trust and Massachusetts Legislative Task Force on the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse; and Sharon Doty, consultant

to the Task Force as well as the *VIRTUS* Program. We learned that education is the key to prevention, and therefore that all clergy, other religious, staff members, and all volunteers who have regular contact with children should be required to complete the *VIRTUS* training.

Finally, the Task Force learned that the murder of Daniel (Danny) Croteau is a source of distrust and conflict for many in the *diocese*. The failure of the *diocese* to respond to books, podcasts, and other news articles about the case had people frustrated. Most people understand that the evidence does not definitively address who killed Danny, but the failure of the *diocese* to address the issue at all is a disappointment to most.⁵

Everything that the Task Force learned has informed the development of the Implementation Strategy for moving the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts to a place where the past informs but no longer controls how allegations are handled, the scope of the diocesan response to complaints, and the efforts to create a safe environment and prevent future abuse.

Section 5

Diocese of Springfield Strategic Plan

2021-2024 Strategic Initiatives and Measurable Objectives

1. The *diocese* will acknowledge the trauma of sexual abuse on members of our community and ensure the allocation of resources needed to promote healing of survivors and the faith community.

A. The *diocese* will create a strong statement acknowledging the impact of sexual abuse by representatives of the church and the failure of diocesan leadership to respond adequately to victim-survivors, their families, and the faith community in a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive manner.

B. The *diocese* will provide transparency by publishing an annual report of the activities of the OSEVA, by providing timely communications on all decisions relating to holding accountable all clergy credibly accused of sexually inappropriate actions, and by proactively promoting all policies, procedures and guidelines on the diocesan website used to keep the faith community safe and any other public forum where this information will be presented to the community.

C. The *diocese* will develop and implement a policy for the use of financial resources in support of survivors and in arriving at any mutually agreed upon settlements with victims.

D. The *diocese* will, as a result of this report, review the organizational structure and budget of the OSEVA to ensure adequate resources for the successful implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

⁵ On May 24, 2021, *Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni* publicly announced the investigation into the 1972 murder of Daniel (Danny) Croteau has been officially closed. On May 21, 2021, District Attorney Gulluni authorized detectives from the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Hampden District Attorney’s Office to obtain an arrest warrant against Richard Lavigne for murder. Lavigne died later that day.

2. The *diocese* will respond to all allegations of sexual abuse in our church community in a timely, compassionate and fair way.

A. The Task Force will reform the diocesan policies/procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse based on trauma-informed and trauma-responsive best practices.

B. The Task Force will reform the *Review Board's* by-laws and procedures based on best practices and compliance to pertinent civil and canonical norms.

C. The *diocese* will establish a protocol for timely and specific communication with a parish affected by any person in a ministerial role being put on administrative leave.

3. The *diocese* will ensure a transparent system of protocols and procedures that guarantee respect and due process for all involved.

A. The bishop will appoint an Advisory Committee to work with the director and staff of the OSEVA to implement within the *diocese* the recommendations in this report and to ensure a system of continuous quality improvement (CQI) is established to regularly review all policies/procedures/programs to keep current with the best trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practice, and to prevent sexual abuse while promoting healing of everyone in our faith community now and in the future. Such review shall measure success by assessing levels of trust, safety and dignity among those impacted.

B. The *diocese* will update its policies and procedures to meet current trauma-informed and trauma-responsive best practices, make it user friendly, and develop a one-page bullet summary for distribution at the parish level.

C. The *diocese* will develop a plan to regularly provide training at the parish level on the new policies and procedures.

D. The *diocese* recognizes that some allegations of sexual abuse by those in ministry may not be *credible*. Therefore, the *diocese* will develop a policy/procedure for protecting and restoring the reputation for anyone in ministry for whom, after a thoughtful and comprehensive investigation by civil authorities and assessment by the *Review Board*, allegations of sexual abuse have been found not to be *credible*.

E. The *diocese* will make the services of an independent legal counsel available to the OSEVA administration.

4. The *diocese* will ensure that the local church leadership is held responsible and accountable for failing to protect children and other vulnerable persons.

A. The *diocese* will develop a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) with each of the region's district attorneys to immediately refer anyone in ministry within the *diocese* accused of past or present abuse for possible criminal prosecution. (Completed April 2020).

B. The current and future bishops of Springfield, Massachusetts will reaffirm their commitment and maintain MOUs with each of the region's district attorneys.

C. The *diocese* will develop a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive communication plan for both internal and external sharing of timely information to the affected parish and the larger community about abuse allegations and resulting decisions regarding offenders.

D. The *diocese* will develop a pastoral outreach program for survivors, their families, the faith community, and families of the accused.

5. The *diocese* will hold those who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse responsible and accountable.

A. The *diocese* will review and update their Code of Conduct for Clergy, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers.

B. The *diocese* will create a policy/procedure and an administrative structure through the bishop, with the review and oversight by the *Review Board*, to hold anyone in ministry who fails to report past or present allegations of sexual abuse accountable.

C. The *Review Board* will ensure the development of a safety plan, including behavioral health services, and regularly review/monitor this plan with anyone who is credibly accused of sexual abuse.

6. The *diocese* will establish programs designed to prevent sexual abuse of anyone in our faith communities in the future.

A. The *diocese* will establish programs designed to prevent sexual abuse and promote healing of anyone in our faith community in the future.

B. Education is the key to prevention. Therefore, the *diocese* will reintroduce and fully implement the *VIRTUS* program in each parish with the requirement that each member of the clergy, all religious, every staff member, and every volunteer who has regular contact with minors complete the *VIRTUS* training.

C. The *diocese* will develop a team in each parish that includes interested volunteers, the pastor, and/or his designee, and the Safe Environment Team Coordinators (formerly known as "Child Advocate") to ensure the implementation of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive best practice of child sexual abuse prevention.

D. The *diocese* will provide the Safe Environment Team in each parish with a clear job description and specialized training.

Section 6 Implementation Strategy

Bishop William D. Byrne, who was appointed as the 10th bishop of Springfield by Pope Francis and ordained and installed on December 14, 2020, also is committed to making significant improvements in the *diocese's* response to sexual abuse of children. He recognizes the importance of adopting a long-term strategic plan with measurable objectives for sustainable positive

outcomes. In addition, Bishop Byrne and his predecessor Bishop Mitchell Rozanski encouraged the Task Force to recommend actions that could be taken immediately when possible as they continued their deliberations.

The “many voices” from which the Task Force solicited input also wanted swift action to improve the diocesan response to these allegations. Consequently, the Task Force has already completed some elements of the plan; has some measurable objectives in process; and recommends that the implementation of the strategic plan be turned over to an Advisory Committee and local parish teams, under the leadership of the director of the OSEVA and at the direction of Bishop Byrne.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

The Task Force is pleased the following outcomes have been achieved:

1. The “listening sessions” held by Bishop Rozanski in early 2019 revealed gaps between what the church was saying about its practices and the reality of the actions being taken. An agreement between the *diocese* and the local district attorneys was necessary to resolve old issues and create a framework for moving forward.

2. The director of OSEVA collaborated with representatives from the three regional district attorneys to develop a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of each party in the reporting and processing of allegations of sexual abuse of children or vulnerable adults by clergy, staff, or volunteers in the Diocese of Springfield. This MOU was agreed to be valid until 2024 and was signed by the Berkshire district attorney, Hampden district attorney, Northwestern district attorney, and by the bishop for the Springfield Diocese in April of 2020. A complete copy of this MOU can be found as Appendix A.

3. As reported earlier, one of the central recommendations of the [Velis Report](#) was to redesign the *Review Board*, expand its membership, and establish procedures that guarantee due process and include adequate checks and balances. A sub-committee of the Task Force developed new by-laws, policies, and procedures to restructure this board. The revisions were approved by the Task Force, forwarded to the bishop and formally adopted in early 2021. **(Subsequent procedural revisions to the *Review Board* By-Laws are pending formal approval by the Bishop at the publishing of this report. The revised Document can be found at Section 7, Appendix B).**

1. The diocese has updated their [mandated reporting policy](#) and has begun training everyone in a ministerial role on this policy and procedure. As part of this training, the OSEVA has developed simple, effective,

concise information that fits on a wallet-size card. Everyone who works and volunteers in the diocese will have a card to carry on their person for easy reference on how to file a mandated report

(For a copy of the new [mandated reporting policy](#), See Section 7, Appendix C).

2. The Task Force created new opportunities for communication from victims and survivors, parishioners, and clergy to provide feedback and input to the process of improving the response to this issue.

OUTCOMES IN PROCESS

There are two additional reforms in process as of the publication of this report.

1. The Code of Conduct is being revised and updated. This policy applies to clergy, staff, educators and volunteers and is expected to be completed and submitted to the bishop for approval by summer 2021.

2. The *diocese* will relaunch the *VIRTUS* child sexual abuse prevention program in 2021. The program will be based in Safe Environment Teams in each parish that includes local coordinators and trained facilitators educating adults about the behavioral characteristics of individuals who may be potential abusers of children. The program also focuses on how to recognize and intervene in the grooming process and create safe environments. The *VIRTUS* program is the gold standard for programs that seek to prevent sexual abuse of children and foster healing within the faith community. Fully implementing this program in the way it was designed is the first step to preventing abuse and creating and maintaining safe environments for all God’s children. Information on the *VIRTUS* program can be found at this website www.virtusonline.org.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Task Force recommends the establishment of a Diocesan Advisory Committee to the OSEVA to ensure the successful completion of all the measurable objectives in this strategic plan by 2024. This group of up to 12 individuals should:

- a. Reflect the diversity of the community.*
- b. Offer a range of skills and expertise.*
- c. Include (but not be limited to) representatives from behavioral health, physical health, law enforcement, education, social work, and human service management.*
- d. Bring experience in the best practices of trauma-informed and trauma- response care.*
- e. Have a person with lived experience with clergy sexual abuse.*

- f. Include a parish volunteer(s).
- g. Have a Safe Environment team representative, and
- h. Include a member of the clergy or a religious.⁶

The Task Force recommends that the Advisory Committee work with the director of OSEVA to develop Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) activities. Best trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practice is continuously evolving. To stay current with changing models of providing safety, healing, and dignity for everyone impacted by sexual abuse, the Advisory Committee will provide an additional “check and balance” for ensuring the Diocese of Springfield is a model for the prevention of sexual abuse of children.

2. The Task Force recommends that the director of OSEVA, in consultation with the bishop and the Advisory Committee, develop an annual work plan to implement the strategic initiatives from the plan. The Annual Work Plan should include specific measurable objectives that fulfill the intention of the Strategic Initiatives developed by the Task Force and adopted by the bishop.

3. The Task Force recommends that the *diocese* publish an annual report of the progress and achievements (or lack thereof) by the OSEVA and the *diocese* as it relates to the Strategic Initiatives. This annual report will be widely distributed and posted on the diocesan website.

4. The Task Force recommends more engagement from local parishes and the faith community in implementing programs designed to prevent sexual abuse of children in their parish. As the *VIRTUS* prevention program is relaunched, each parish will be asked to build a Safe Environment Team to ensure the success of this important initiative. This team will include trained *VIRTUS* facilitators, a local safe environment coordinator, lay volunteers, and the pastor or his designee.

The Task Force recognizes that there is a great deal of work to be done to implement the broad range of responses and proactive efforts to prevent future abuse. Adoption and implementation of these strategic initiatives and accepting these recommendations will provide a framework for accomplishing what has eluded the *diocese* in the past. It will offer a way to work together at the parish and diocesan level to create a safe environment for all God’s children and offers compassionate, supportive care to those who have been harmed in the past by abuse from individuals and from the *diocese*.

⁶ This preliminary list of potential members for the Advisory Committee is not intended to be all inclusive, and while the director of the OSEVA will serve as a link between the work of the Task Force and this group, it may be helpful for one or two members from the Task Force to transition to the Advisory Committee.

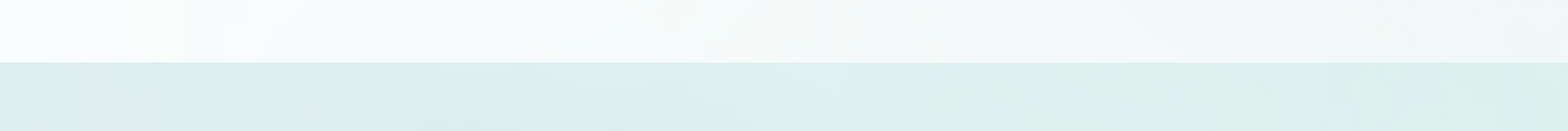
Section 7 Appendices

- A.** Memorandum of Understanding Between the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield, a Corporation Sole and The Offices of the District Attorneys of the Berkshire, Hampden and Northwestern Districts (April 2020)
<http://diospringfield.org/wp-content/uploads/Memorandum-of-Understanding.pdf>
- B.** Diocesan Review Board By-Laws and Procedures
<https://www.diospringfield.org/OSEVA/TaskForceReviewBoardByLawsandProcedures.pdf>
- C.** Mandated Reporter Policy and Procedure (Revised April 1, 2021)
http://diospringfield.org/wp-content/uploads/RCBS_Mandated-Reporting-Policy-and-Procedure-04.01.2021_Executed.pdf
- D.** Report of Findings of Credibility of Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor (June 2, 2021)
<http://diospringfield.org/osevacrediblyaccused/>
- E.** United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*
<https://www.usccb.org/offices/child-and-youth-protection/charter-protection-children-and-young-people>

Section 8 Source Documents

- 1.** Report to the Diocese of Springfield Massachusetts: Independent Investigation Prepared by Hon. Peter A. Velis (Ret.) (June 21, 2020)
<http://diospringfield.org/velisreport/>
- 2.** Online Survey on the Response to Sexual Abuse within the Diocese of Springfield Report (with Task Force Executive Summary)
<http://www.diospringfield.org/OSEVA/SurveyResponseSexualAbuseEnglishRedacted.pdf>
- 3.** Improving Acknowledgement, Response, and Prevention of Sexual Abuse in the Diocese of Springfield: Perspectives from People Who Have Experienced Clergy Sexual Abuse Prepared by Stop It Now! in consultation with Melissa A. Bright, Ph.D. (April 7, 2021)
<http://www.diospringfield.org/OSEVA/NowDioReport.pdf>
- 4.** Report to the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts Independent Task Force Prepared by Arpeggias, LLC (with Task Force Executive Summary) (March 2021)
<http://www.diospringfield.org/OSEVA/ClergySurveyReportSharonDoty.pdf>

Executive summaries with aggregate data are provided in order to protect the privacy of respondents which was promised at the time of recruitment.





Diocese of Springfield