

# SAINT KILIAN PARISH

7076 FRANKLIN ROAD, CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP, PA 16066

## Parish Protocol for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

New amendments to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) took effect in 2015 in Pennsylvania. These amendments establish important requirements for reporting and make failure to report child abuse a crime.

Under the Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania (CPSL) "child abuse" is not limited to sexual abuse. It includes inflicting or creating an imminent risk of physical injury, mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or harmful physical neglect. A "child" is any individual who is under the age of 18.

**The Diocese of Pittsburgh urges that all Church Personnel resolve any questions about the interpretation of the law in favor of reporting.**

You must report all suspected abuse, not just abuse perpetrated by church personnel. **You do not need to make a first-hand observation of the suspected child abuse victim.**

➤ **IF A CHILD VOLUNTARILY DISCLOSES ABUSE:**

- ♦ Control your emotions and do not look shocked or disgusted.
- ♦ Listen: let the child talk at his/her own pace.
- ♦ Reassure: let the child know it's not his/her fault and that you are going to help them.
- ♦ Document: write down the date, time and specific circumstances of the disclosure including who was present and what prompted the child to reveal the abuse.

➤ **DO NOT:**

- ♦ Force the child to talk. Let the child know that you are concerned and that you are available if they need to talk to someone.
- ♦ Ask the child to disclose abuse separately to different staff members.
- ♦ Keep asking questions because you want to prove child abuse.
- ♦ Touch the child without their permission.
- ♦ Prohibit the child from returning to their home.

**TO REPORT THE ABUSE:**

**If you suspect that a crime has been committed or the suspected victim is in imminent danger: call 911 or local law enforcement authorities and report the incident immediately.**

**STEP 1: Call ChildLine immediately (1-800-932-0313, 24 hours a day, seven days a week)**

**STEP 2: Report the suspected abuse to your immediate supervisor**/the staff person designated by the pastor to report the abuse: **Ralph Bachner 412-855-2057** (parish reporting)

**STEP 3: File a written electronic report** within 48 hours at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis>

**\*In all instances the pastor should be informed\***

Any individual in the parish (paid/volunteer) who comes into contact with children in the course of his or her work/ministry and has "reasonable cause to suspect" that the minor has been abused is considered to be a mandated reporter. Reasonable cause is not limited to first hand knowledge only, but also second hand information as well.

You are mandated to report child abuse incidents involving children who are under the supervision, guidance or training of the church/school entity with which you are affiliated, regardless of 1) whether you learned of the abuse on/off duty or 2) the location the suspected abuse occurred.

While school employees and administrators (which include pastors who oversee parochial schools) are required



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to follow the general reporting mandates of the CPSL, they are also subject to different reporting procedures when the perpetrator is another individual who works in the school. **School personnel should follow the Catholic School Protocol for reporting suspected child abuse.** All others should adhere to the above protocol.

The CPSL specifically grants civil and criminal legal immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse.

(Diocese of Pittsburgh, Reporting of Child Abuse and the Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania, Rev. 2015)