

## An Ongoing Commitment to Keeping Children Safe

### Diocese Will Learn From Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

This special issue of The A.D. Times is designed to provide the faithful of the Diocese of Allentown with a comprehensive overview of the issues raised in the recent Grand Jury report, and to explain the strong action taken by the Diocese over the past 16 years to protect children in our parishes, ministries and schools.

Additional information can be found on the Diocesan website, at [www.allentowndiocese.org](http://www.allentowndiocese.org). In the interest of transparency, the Diocese has placed a link to the Grand Jury Report on the website, as well as a list of diocesan priests who have had credible allegations of abuse of minors.

**Bishop Alfred Schlert's letter** will be read at all Masses. It includes a detailed look at what the Diocese has done – both to care for the victims and to keep children safe – and it delivers a strong message of determination and hope. The letter is reproduced here in its entirety.

**Also in this issue:**

- \* How the Diocese cares for victims of abuse with compassion, respect and dignity, through the work of the **Victim Assistance Coordinator**.
- \* A detailed summary of **protections put in place** by the Diocese to prevent abuse in the future.
- \* A review of the various **Safe Environment Programs**, in which the Diocese works with parents, civil authorities, educators, employees and volunteers to establish and maintain the safest environment for minors.
- \* A look at the **Protecting God's Children Program**, which is the

Please see COMMITMENT page 4 ▶▶

## Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator Helps Those Hurting and in Need

By TAMI QUIGLEY  
Staff writer

For the past 15 years, the Diocese of Allentown has had a person designated to listen to victims of clergy sexual abuse, to pray with them, and to help them on the road to healing.

"To witness the courage these individuals have in sharing their experiences and to witness their strength in healing has been so powerful," said Wendy Krisak, Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator.

The victim assistance coordinator



**Krisak**

Please see COORDINATOR page 4 ▶▶



**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

Mailing Address  
POST OFFICE BOX F  
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA  
18105-1538

## Abuse is Abhorrent and Has No Place in the Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As many of you are aware, a statewide Grand Jury has been investigating clergy sexual abuse of minors in six Pennsylvania dioceses. This past week, the Report was released, and it includes incidents of past abuse in the Diocese of Allentown.

Abuse is abhorrent and has no place in the Church, or anywhere in society. Most of the incidents date back decades. The offending priests are no longer in active ministry, are laicized (defrocked), or are deceased.

Since 2002, our Diocese has taken strong and decisive actions to address abuse. Our goal is to prevent it from happening again, but that does not change the fact that the abuse of children is terrible and sinful. The abuse was devastating and tragic for the victims and survivors, and continues to cause pain and anger to this very day. I ask forgiveness of victims and their families who have lived with this burden, sometimes for many years.

As your Bishop, I am deeply saddened by these incidents. I sincerely apologize for the past sins and crimes committed by some members of the clergy. I apologize to the survivors of abuse and their loved ones. For the times when those in the Church did not live up to Christ's call to holiness, and did not do what needed to be done, I apologize.

I also apologize to you, the faithful of the Diocese, for the toll this issue has taken over the years: the sadness, the anger, the doubts, and the embarrassment it may have brought you as a Catholic. I ask for your forgiveness, and I thank you for your perseverance and for your courageous witness to our faith.

I want to assure you that as a Church, we will learn from the Report of the Grand Jury and use it to further improve our protections for children and young people.

Sadly, abuse still is part of the society in which we live. We acknowledge our past failures, and we are determined to do what is necessary to protect the innocent, now and in the future.

**As your Bishop, my first priority is keeping our children safe.**

For the past sixteen years, the Diocese of Allentown has had a policy of zero tolerance. We report cases of abuse of minors to the authorities, and perpetrators are no longer in active ministry. We require rigorous background checks. We have 123 designated Safe Environment Coordinators in our parishes, schools, and ministries. We have trained more than 38,000 adults on how to recognize and respond to abuse. More than 5,000 people have taken Mandated Reporter Training. Children in our schools and religious education programs receive age-appropriate abuse-prevention training every year.

We are focused on re-establishing trust among all those who rely on the Catholic Church for help, for spiritual guidance, and for strength.

We are thankful for the vast majority of our Clergy and Religious who had absolutely no involvement in the unholy behavior of the past, and who continue to work every day for you, the People of God, in the Diocese of Allentown.

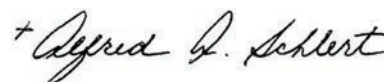
And so, my message to you today is one of hope, that the work we are doing will ensure that our precious children are protected, and that the sins of the few will not dilute your faith in our Church today.

Every time we celebrate Sunday Mass, we recite the Nicene Creed, which includes these words: "I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

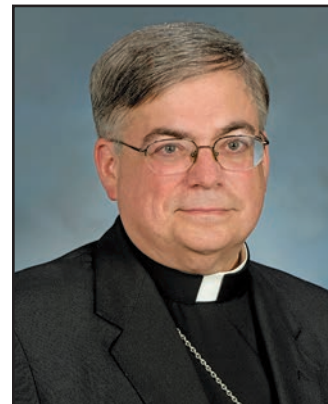
Our Church is indeed holy. It nurtures us and offers us the necessary means to salvation. Because it was founded by our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Church remains holy in its mission, even when some of its people are sinful. In spite of this human sinfulness, our Church is still here for all of us. It always will be, just as Christ promised. The Church will remain our foundation and our source of grace.

So I ask you today to join me as we pray for the victims and survivors of these reprehensible acts. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, we ask God for the strength to heal and for the grace to walk together as one family of faith.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown



"The Allentown Diocese in the Year of Our Lord"

# THE A.D. TIMES

Published biweekly on Thursday by  
Allentown Catholic Communications, Inc.  
at P.O. Box F  
Allentown, PA 18105-1538  
Phone: 610-871-5200, Ext. 2264  
Fax: 610-439-7694  
E-mail: [adtimes@allentowndioocese.org](mailto:adtimes@allentowndioocese.org)

**President**  
Bishop Alfred Schlert

**Secretary for External Affairs**  
Matt Kerr

**Editor**  
Jill Caravan

**Staff Writers**  
Tara Connolly  
Tami Quigley

**Design & Production**  
Marcus Schneck

**Advertising Contact**  
Lori Anderson

**Office Assistant**  
Priscilla Tatara

### MISSION STATEMENT

As part of the Catholic Press, The A.D. Times is the official newspaper for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown, serving Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton and Schuylkill counties. The A.D. Times proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the People of God through evangelization, catechesis and the teaching of the Church, the extension of Christ's presence in the world today. It endeavors to nourish, strengthen and challenge the faith of its readers by continually providing news information, formation, inspiration, religious education and Catholic identification. Under the patronage of Mary, Mother of the Church, The A.D. Times serves the Church so that the Kingdom of God might become a reality in our society transformed by His Good News.

### POLICY STATEMENTS

The A.D. Times will consider all editorial copy and photos submitted in a fair and objective manner. The newspaper reserves the right to reject or edit any submission.

Any advertising copy accepted does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or endorsement of The A.D. Times and/or its publisher. The A.D. Times reserves the right to reject any advertising copy submitted.

### DEADLINES

Advertising copy must be received by Monday of the week before publication. News copy must be received by Thursday of the week before publication.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Catholic Press Association,  
Rockville Centre, N.Y.  
Catholic News Service,  
Washington, D.C.

Catholic Press Association Award Winner  
1991, 1992, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999,  
2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2010,  
2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016  
2017, 2018

### POSTAL INFORMATION

The A.D. Times (USPS 004-111) is published on Thursdays, weekly once/biweekly/triweekly in December, at a subscription cost of \$20 per year by Allentown Catholic Communications, Inc. at 1515 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Allentown, PA 18102-4500. Periodicals Postage paid at Allentown, PA and additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The A.D. Times, P.O. Box F, Allentown, PA 18105-1538**

## How the Diocese of Allentown Keeps Children Safe

Since 2002, the Diocese of Allentown has taken strong and decisive actions to address the issue of clergy sexual abuse, with a goal of preventing it from happening again.

**Zero-tolerance policy:** For the past 16 years, the Diocese has had a policy of zero tolerance. In the event of an allegation of abuse, the Diocese takes immediate action to notify law enforcement and remove the priest from ministry, and deals with the issue transparently in cooperation with law enforcement.

**Rigorous background checks** are required for clergy, lay personnel and volunteers in parishes and ministries.

A **Victim Assistance Coordinator** helps victims of abuse with compassion, respect and dignity. The Diocese has reached out pastorally and professionally, not only to victims, but also to their families.

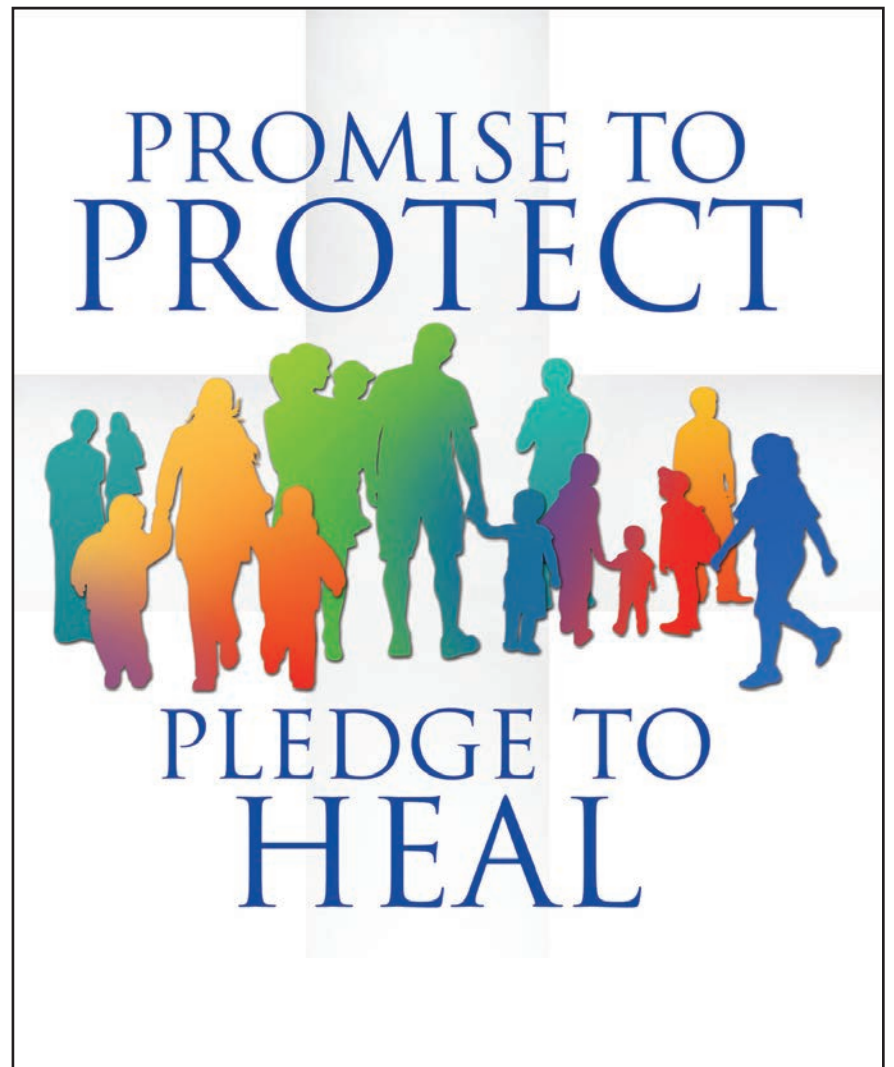
A **Diocesan Review Board** of highly qualified professionals advises the Bishop in any matters of sexual abuse of minors.

A **Safe Environment Coordinator** position exists to oversee the many programs designed to create the safest environment for minors.

**Protecting God's Children training** has been given to thousands of volunteers, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious, employees, school principals, teachers and others. This training explains how to recognize and prevent child abuse.

More information can be found on the Diocese's website, [www.allentowndioocese.org](http://www.allentowndioocese.org) under Youth Protection.

Many more resources on this topic are available on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).



## Diocese Upholds Protection, Accountability and Healing With Safe Environment Programs

By TARA CONNOLLY  
Staff writer

Eleven safe environment programs have been implemented by the Diocese of Allentown as it continues to take action and uphold the norms set forth by the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Sister Meg Cole, S.S.J., who was appointed coordinator of the Diocesan Safe Environment Office, said the charter directs action in: creating a safe environment for children and young people; healing of victims and survivors; making prompt and effective response to allegations; cooperating with civil authorities; and disciplining perpetrators.

The charter, accepted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), also calls for providing means of accountability for the future to ensure the problem continues to be effectively dealt with through the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and the National Review Board.

The Diocese has also complied with the charter's requirements to establish a review board and offer programs to educate priests, clergy, employees and parents about sexual abuse.

Since the charter was accepted, the



Diocese has enacted the following Safe Environment Programs:

- \* background check policy;
- \* "Protecting God's Children for Adults" (PGC);
- \* student program in schools and religious preparation programs;
- \* the parent program titled "Called to Protect";
- \* appointment of a Safe Environment Coordinator;

- \* guidelines for spiritual directors;
- \* guidelines for counselors;
- \* policy concerning youth under 18 years of age;
- \* overnight trip guidelines.

In response, the Diocese has required all adults who come in contact with children to be trained through "Protecting God's Children." The Diocese also sup-

Please see PROGRAMS page 4 ▶▶

# Diocese Has Trained Over 38,000 in Prevention of Sex Abuse

By TARA CONNOLLY  
Staff writer

After the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002, the Diocese of Allentown implemented Protecting God's Children (PGC) in response to the charter's guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.

Sister Meg Cole, coordinator of the Diocesan Safe Environment Office, said the Diocese has since educated 38,164 priests, deacons, employees, volunteers and parents about sexual abuse.

Every adult in every parish who works with a child or comes into contact with a child must attend one of these sessions," said Sister Meg.

The award-winning program educates every Diocesan priest, employee and volunteer who interacts with children about

**"It's beneficial to anyone who believes that our children are our most precious gift and are deserving of our unconditional love and safety."**

the damage caused by child sexual abuse and what they can do to prevent it.

The sessions, which last three to four hours, train participants about the signs of child sexual

abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and steps that can be used to prevent child sexual abuse.

"The program is beneficial to anyone who believes that our children are our most precious gift and are deserving of our unconditional love and safety," said

Sister Meg.

Throughout PGC's history with the Diocese, the program has undergone three revisions, and a fourth revision is on the horizon.

PGC outlines five basic steps adults can take to prevent child abuse: know the warning signs; control access; monitor all programs; be aware; and communicate your concerns.

According to the program, some of the "warning signs" include the adult always wanting to be alone with the child, the adult giving gifts to the child without parental permission, and the adult using bad language or sharing inappropriate jokes with the child.

To "control access," the program calls for the adults to be extraordinarily careful about determining who can work with children and youth. PGC also mandates checking references, conducting interviews and performing background checks for adults or volunteers working with or around children.

The third step, "monitor all programs," backs careful supervision of all activities and warns against leaving a child unattended with only one adult present.

PGC also urges adults to "be aware" by observing children by talking, listening and watching them to spot a change in a child's behavior or personality that may indicate something is making the child feel uncomfortable.

The final step urges adults to "communicate your concerns" and to be alert to situations when there is inappropriate behavior between an adult and a child. This step also mandates notifying a supervisor and calling the child abuse hotline and the police when abuse has occurred or is suspected.

There is a Protecting God's Children website to which new information is added each week. There is an emphasis on ar-



A recent "Protecting God's Children" training is conducted by Jarod Rabold at St. Thomas More Church, Allentown.

ticles and interactive features designed to increase the public awareness about child sexual abuse. It provides adults with the knowledge and tools they need to help prevent and, if necessary, to respond appropriately to child sexual abuse.

The training sessions, held throughout

the five-county Diocese, have been conducted by an estimated 50 people who were trained as facilitators by Sister Meg and officials from Praesidium, a Texas-based company, Virtus Programs and Services of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

## Independent Diocesan Review Board Provides Outside Perspective

**Panel of Distinguished Experts Assists Bishop in Matters of Abuse**

By TAMI QUIGLEY  
Staff writer

An independent panel of experts known as the Diocesan Review Board assists the Bishop in discharging his responsibilities involving the sexual abuse of minors by clerics. It was formed in 2003.

**"Our Diocesan Review Board is a valuable asset in the Diocese's efforts to protect children and young people."**

Dr. Eugene Decker is a charter member of the board and has served as board chair for the past several years.

Decker is the medical director of the Family Practice Residency Program at St. Luke's-Warren Hospital, Phillipsburg, New Jersey

and medical director of the DeSales Physician Assistant Program at DeSales University, Center Valley. He has served as a consultant with both the Warren County, New Jersey and Northampton County prosecutors' offices.

"I'm a family doctor with expertise in examining children who have been sexually abused," said Decker.

Decker has coached track at Notre Dame High School, Easton for 14 years and CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) track at St. Jane Frances de

Chantal, Easton for 24 years. He is Diocesan CYO coordinator for cross country.

"I'm extremely proud to be part of the Diocese and the board," said Decker.

Other members are Rev. Michael Mullins, pastor of St. Paul Church, Allentown; Gwen Millets; Chris Moughan; and Richard Podguski.

Father Mullins was ordained in 2005. He served in parishes in Reading, Whitehall and Orefield, was the Diocesan Director of Vocations and has led St. Paul's Parish since 2015.

Gwen Millets has been a caseworker with Lehigh County Children and Youth Services for 16 years. She conducts investigations relating to child abuse, which includes interviewing children and alleged perpetrators. She earned a master of social work degree from Widener University.

Christopher Moughan has been a federal probation officer for 25 years. He is currently the senior U.S. probation officer for the federal district court based in Allentown. His duties include supervision and investigation of federal offenders, including sex offenders. He oversees the location monitoring program in the Allentown office.

Richard Podguski has been the director of the Bureau of Offender Reentry of the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole for the past 11 years. He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice/law enforcement administration from DeSales University, Center Valley and a master's degree in public administration from Kutztown University.

Decker said board members over the years have been physicians, and worked in social service, psychology or in some way with people in medical services or the prison system.

"I'm very proud of the people I've served

Please see BOARD page 4 ▶▶

## Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse

God of endless love,  
ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:  
You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,  
join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt  
in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize  
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



## An Ongoing Commitment to Keep Children Safe

Diocese Will Learn From Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

[www.allentowndiocese.org](http://www.allentowndiocese.org)

## Coordinator

▶▶Continued from page 1

provides assistance for the immediate pastoral care of people who were abused when they were minors by a priest, deacon, employee or volunteer of the Diocese or one of its parishes.

"I pray each day for all of those who I currently assist, but also for those who are hurting in silence," said Krisak.

Krisak is a licensed professional counselor and a national certified counselor. She has a master's degree in counseling psychology from Kutztown University.

In her role as victim assistance coordinator, Krisak meets with survivors to provide a compassionate presence of the Diocese by listening and assisting in the development of a plan for healing.

She arranges for psychological treatment and spiritual healing, as appropriate, and seeks other referral sources as appropriate for the psychological needs of the survivor.

Krisak arranges for and participates in pastoral meetings for survivors with the Bishop or his representative and obtains support for the needs of the individual and their family.

She collaborates with professionals and assures a smooth transition and follow-through with survivor and family. Krisak also works with current treatment

teams for continuation of care.

Krisak collaborates with other victim assistance coordinators in dioceses where the abuse occurred or where the survivor resides, as well as religious communities, as appropriate.

She continues her education to enhance her ability to assist those in need.

Krisak assists in the planning of and attends the Healing Mass for individuals who have experienced trauma. She participates in the quarterly meetings of the Diocesan Review Board, the purpose of which is to assist the Bishop in situations involving sexual abuse.

The Office of the Victim Assistance Coordinator was formed in 2003. Krisak has been in the position since August 2012. The previous victim assistance coordinators were Barbara Murphy and Helen Kelleher, both of whom retired from the position.

Parents, guardians, children and survivors of sexual abuse are invited and encouraged to contact the Diocese of Allentown for more information about this program. The fullness of compassion should be extended to these victims by the Church.

To learn more about the Diocese's Youth Protection Programs, Sexual Abuse Policy and Code of Conduct, visit [www.allentowndiocese.org](http://www.allentowndiocese.org) and click on "Youth Protection" at top right.

Krisak may be contacted at: direct line 1-800-791-9209; fax 484-664-7794; email [victimassistance@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:victimassistance@allentowndiocese.org).

*"I pray each day for all of those who I currently assist, but also for those who are hurting in silence."*

## Board

▶▶Continued from page 3

with and the present members," he said. "Bishop Schlert actively participates in every meeting to get the recommendations of the board members."

Decker emphasized that when the board reviews a case, the accuser and the accused are anonymous. "That's the correct way to do it."

The board now meets quarterly to review the code of conduct to see if something needs to be revised, the code apply-

ing to lay employees of the Diocese as well as priests. "The code has been revised multiple times," he said.

Monsignor David James, Diocesan Vicar General said, "Our Diocesan Review Board is a valuable asset in the Diocese's efforts to protect children and young people. I know that Bishop Schlert and his predecessors have relied greatly on the real-world expertise of the men and women of the Review Board who are advising the Bishops on these important matters."

## Programs

▶▶Continued from page 2

ports the program for children, "Child Protection Catechist."

Another program aimed at parents, "Called to Protect," is also offered by the Diocese. It is a comprehensive safe environment program developed exclusively for Catholic ministries, parents, youth and young children. Primarily DVD-based training, it builds on decades of abuse prevention research.

To keep better track and accountability of priests, clergy, diocesan employees and volunteers, Sister Meg said the Diocese opted to maintain a database.

"A Diocesan database has been created to keep track on both the local and Diocesan level of all staff and volunteers," she said.

According to Kelly Bruce, the Diocese's Charter Compliance Officer, all Diocesan priests and Diocesan parish and school employees must sign and acknowledge the Diocesan sex abuse policy and code of conduct.

Every five years, clergy, employees and all volunteers who have direct contact with children must successfully complete a Pennsylvania Abuse History Certificate, a Pennsylvania State Police criminal background check, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint

background check.

Those same individuals are also required to complete Mandated Reporter Training and a program called Protecting God's Children, which educates adults on what can be done to prevent child sexual abuse.

"Each Diocese in the country had to comply based on their state requirements. We are audited by a vendor hired by the USCCB every year," said Bruce.

"Every three years, an on-site audit is performed. Our last on-site audit was in October 2017. We have always been found in compliance with the USCCB requirements," she said.

In further compliance with the charter, the Diocese appointed Wendy Krisak as the Victim Assistance Coordinator, to reach out pastorally and professionally, not only to victims, but also to their families, who can be devastated by these offenses.

The Diocese also created a five-person Diocesan Review Board of qualified professionals to advise Bishop of Allentown Alfred Schlert to assist him in his responsibilities involving the sexual abuse of minors by clerics.

*"We have always been found in compliance with the USCCB requirements."*

## Commitment

▶▶Continued from page 1

training provided to thousands of priests, deacons, religious, lay employees and others on recognizing abuse and prevent-

ing it before it happens.

\* An overview of the **Diocesan Review Board**, a panel of experts in various professional disciplines who advise Bishop Schlert on this issue.

\* A copy of the **Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse** from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

## DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN Reporting of Child Abuse

Any person having reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to child abuse, or acts of child abuse, or any person having information about sexual abuse by any priest should contact one or more of the following:

- Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-932-0313
- Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, Wendy S. Krisak: 1-800-791-9209
- Office of Attorney General  
Clergy Abuse Hotline: 1-888-538-8541
- County Offices of Children and Youth Services:

Berks	610-478-6700
Carbon	570-325-3644
Lehigh	610-782-3064
Northampton	610-829-4690
Schuylkill	570-628-1050

The Diocese of Allentown urges any questions about whether to report to be resolved in favor of reporting.