



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KALAMAZOO, Mich.: (April 18, 2024): In conjunction with the nationally observed Child Abuse Prevention Month held every April, the Diocese of Kalamazoo announces today that it is undertaking a thorough review and updating of all its policies protecting children and youth. A final and complete updated set of policies is expected this summer, but the first significant element was revealed today in the publication of a list of individuals disqualified from working with children or youth.

"These major updates and continued review of our diocesan policies are with three primary goals in mind," said Bishop Lohse, "First, to protect the children and youth entrusted to us by creating safe environment in our churches, schools and apostolates; second, to work to educate our faithful and those in our community to recognize predatory and other behavior that puts children at risk; and third, to work toward eradicating all forms of child abuse."

Shortly after his ordination as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Bishop Lohse made it a top priority to address the area of child and youth protection. Drawing on his extensive background as the former director of the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth in the Diocese of Erie, he convened a task force of diocesan personnel and clergy to do a thorough and systematic review of all policies and procedures to be applied consistently throughout the diocese.

In announcing the updates today, Bishop Edward M. Lohse acknowledged the pain and suffering of all survivor/victims of childhood sexual abuse.

"In my responsibilities, I have met with numerous survivors of childhood sexual abuse. I have heard their stories and witnessed their pain. Childhood sexual abuse is a grave evil, and we are

committed to doing all that we can to provide healing to survivors and a safe environment to young people entrusted to our care.”

Intended to help ensure safe environments for children, one of the components of the diocese’s updated policies announced today is the release of a list of individuals who are disqualified and prohibited from working or volunteering with children in any parish, school, agency, institution, or any other Catholic entity located within the Diocese of Kalamazoo. Individuals appear on the list because, *in the judgment of the Diocese of Kalamazoo*, they have been credibly accused of actions that disqualify and prohibit them from working or volunteering with children or youth. These actions, if done by someone who at the time was employed or volunteering for any parish, school, agency, institution, or any other Catholic entity within the Diocese of Kalamazoo, include:

- continued violation of a child-protection policy after warnings,
- failing as a mandated reporter to report allegations of abuse of minors,
- failing to act to prevent abuse that they knew to be happening,
- furnishing pornography to minors,
- the possession/use of child pornography,
- physical abuse of minors,
- direct sexual abuse or sexual assault of minors.

This list includes both clergy and non-clergy alike and covers more than sexual abuse. It is important to remember the accusations, while considered credible in the judgment of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, are not the equivalent of conviction in a court of law. Some of the individuals on the list are deceased. Others are individuals well-known to the faithful of this Diocese but who are alleged to have committed disqualifying actions in places outside of rather than within the Diocese of Kalamazoo; they are already listed on similar public disclosure lists elsewhere.

The Diocese of Kalamazoo is committed to helping survivors of childhood sexual abuse find healing. Survivors can call a twenty-four-hour crisis hotline available through Catholic Charities at 800-873-8336. Additionally, the diocese offers free of charge *The Trauma Recovery Program*,

a 10-week program open to all people dealing with the impact of childhood abuse. More than 600 people have participated in this program since its launch in 2003.

Anyone who is aware of child sexual abuse should report the matter to the appropriate law enforcement agency. The Diocese of Kalamazoo welcomes any additional information that may shed light on any past or present cases of disqualifying and prohibiting actions and will update the list of those disqualified from working with children and youth in the future as necessary based on any new information or investigations.

Additional information, including the list itself, may be found at www.diokzoo.org/protect