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Archdiocese of New Orleans

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

In response to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Archdiocese of New Orleans continues to make the Hot Line available for anyone who has been hurt or sexually abused by anyone who works for the Church.

The Hot Line the number is (504) 522 – 5019.

In continuing our commitment to support and to facilitate healing, we invite and encourage individuals who have been hurt or sexually abused recently or in the past by clergy, religious or other employees to the Archdiocese to call our Hot Line. The Hot Line is available 24 hours a day and your message will be received confidentially by a trained mental health professional. In addition, anyone can make a direct call during regular business hours to the

VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR AT (504) 861 – 6253.

The Mission is Compassion



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PROMISE TO PROTECT

PLEDGE TO HEAL

If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy...

Please believe in the possibility for hope, help and healing.

We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

Please call the **HOT LINE (594) 522 – 5019** or **1 (866) – 792-2873**

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*7887 Walmsley Avenue • New Orleans, Louisiana 70125 • PHONE (504) 861-6253
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THE OFFICE OF VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR

Following the meeting of the Bishops in Dallas in 2002, the Archdiocesan Sexual Abuse Hotline was set up on June 1, 2002 to receive calls from persons alleging abuse by priests or deacons. Sister Carmelita Centanni, MSC was one of several volunteers who received the incoming calls. When the office of Victims' Assistance Coordinator was established October 1, 2002, Sister Carmelita, a Marianite of Holy Cross and a clinical psychologist, was hired for the position.

Her first task was to contact each person who had called the Hot Line, thank them for having the courage to call and apologize in the name of the church for whatever harm they may have experienced. In addition to the phone conversation, individuals are invited to come into the office as another venue to tell their story. A thorough investigation follows the interview and the Victims' Assistance Coordinator follows-up closely with the caller assuring support and confidentiality. Callers alleging abuse were asked if they had reported their allegations to the police or if they wanted the archdiocese to report it. Many callers just wanted for someone representing the Archdiocese to hear their story. Within the flow of the process individuals were offered counseling to be paid by the Archdiocese. In addition, some asked for Spiritual Direction for which the Archdiocese also paid.

Periodically, new callers have been added to that list. Some calls come in that are not related to clergy sexual abuse. However, each caller is responded to with compassion and efforts are made to direct the call to the appropriate office. Calls of support continue to be made to those individuals who wish to be contacted. Some have expressed gratitude for the contact and declined further contact stating that they knew how to reach the Victims' Assistance Coordinator if they needed to do so. This decision can be therapeutic as it can indicate the individual is ready to move on.

When an individual requests counseling, the names of three therapists are given. The therapists have been identified as open to working with the Archdiocese as well as working with alleged victims of sexual abuse by clergy. The individual then makes the phone calls and decides with whom they will work. Having them make the contact is a way of empowering them to be in charge of their own process.

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Each complainant is also offered the opportunity to meet with the Archbishop. These meetings are another aspect to the healing and for some the beginning. Between 2002 - 2009, Archbishop Alfred Hughes has met personally with anyone who brought forth an allegation and had requested meeting with him. These were often emotional meetings.

Some callers want to have nothing to do with the Church and others who want to bet back in the church are really struggling with lack of trust. They want to know how they can get back to feeling good about their relationship with God. Even if people do not want to have anything to do with the church they want to feel OK about God. This, too, is part of the healing process.

In essence, the Office of the Victims' Assistance Coordinator has provided a forum especially for victims/survivors to tell their story and to know there is someone who will listen and will make periodic follow-up pastoral calls. Sometimes when people call they are "testing the waters" to see how they will be received. That allows them to move forward with some level of trust and to continue the conversation with the Victims' Assistance Coordinator. Many see the position as an anchor to the church where there is help and healing.

From the Office of the VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR

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