

# Archdiocese issues sex-abuse policy

BOSTON (CNS) — The Boston Archdiocese, where investigations of clergy sex abuse against minors led to the resignation last December of Cardinal Bernard F. Law, has issued a 112-page policy to prevent further abuses.

It requires clergy, archdiocesan personnel and church volunteers to report knowledge of sexual abuse of minors or reasonable suspicion of it to civil and church authorities. It also pledges archdiocesan cooperation with civil authorities.

Under the policy, allegations are to be investigated by a diocesan review board which is to make recommendations to the archbishop.

It outlines programs for teaching about and preventing sex abuse in parishes and Catholic schools.

"Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Children" was released May 30 and posted on the archdiocesan Web site.

Once the archdiocese starts a preliminary investigation against an accused cleric, the archbishop may request the accused to voluntarily refrain from public exercise of ministry or he may "decree the removal of the faculties of a cleric for the duration of the preliminary investigation," the policy states.

News investigations and court proceedings last year turned up evidence that in past decades the archdiocese had tried to cover up abuse cases and had transferred to other parishes or church posts some priests known to church authorities to have abused minors. The Boston investigations also sparked an ongoing crisis in the U.S. church as cler-



Reuters/CNS

**Bishop Richard G. Lennon**

gy sex-abuse cases came to light in other dioceses. Cardinal Law stepped down as head of the archdiocese last Dec. 13 when Pope John Paul II accepted his resignation. Father Robert Oliver, an archdiocesan canon lawyer directed the drafting of the procedures. They are the archdiocese's rules for applying universal and national church law on the protection of children.

Many of the policies promulgated have been in use in the archdiocese for several months.

The policy document describes the work of different offices that have been established to handle allegations and to prevent future abuses. These include the Office of Healing and Assistance Ministry; the Office of Child Advocacy, Implementation and Oversight; and the review board, made up of mainly lay people.

Father Oliver said that the archdiocese has had a review board for 11 years with the current review board constituted according to the new church law.

The Office of Healing and Assistance Ministry, said Father Oliver, provides pastoral and spiritual care, and professional services of psychiatrists and other medical personnel as well as access to support groups.

A separate section outlines norms for investigating accused lay archdiocesan personnel or volunteers.

"We've been restructuring all of our offices, changing entirely how we handle not only allegations and how they are received, but how we can give support to persons who have been hurt, how we are training everybody in the archdiocese to recognize signs of abuse and how we've instituted mandated reporting," Father Oliver said.

"Those changes have been ongoing for 14 or 15 months. So what this (the document) does, is it puts down in the formal policies and procedures, which are laws, how we are going to do it," he said.

The revision of the 1993 policy began with the creation by Cardinal Law of the Cardinal's Commission for the Protection of Children, established in late January 2002. The commission issued its report Oct. 7, 2002. The archdiocese took its recommendations and consulted with the priests' council, the pastoral council, pastors, theologians, canon lawyers and lay people.

The final document was written by several pastors, theologians and canon lawyers and incorporates the recommendations of the commission with suggestions of the other groups.

Father Oliver said that the new policy goes far beyond the 1993 policy.

"The 1993 policy only discussed how allegations against clergy would be handled," said Father Oliver. "What became clear in the early part of 2002 was that there were situations that we were encountering that the policy had never contemplated."

Father Oliver said that the new policy goes beyond the requirements of civil law in requiring all clergy,

archdiocesan personnel and volunteers to report suspected child abuse to authorities. Civil law requires that only people in certain positions have the responsibility of reporting suspected abuse, exempting many church volunteers, he said.

Father Oliver cited 2001 rules approved by the pope, which include clergy sex abuse of minors among the serious crimes that should be handled by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Once the archdiocese has completed the preliminary investigation of an accusation against a cleric, the proceedings are sent to the congregation, which then determines whether there should be a canonical trial to determine if the accused is guilty and, if so, what the penalty should be, said Father Oliver.

Father Oliver noted that the policy outlines a "clear procedure that (the priests) will understand so that at each stage of the process they know what will happen, what is expected of them, and then what potentially could happen with the information that is gathered."

The policy also outlines procedures for church investigators to use with alleged victims and witnesses.

## Audits for charter compliance to begin in June

WASHINGTON (CNS) — More than 50 auditors under the direction of the Gavin Group of Boston will begin formal assessments in late June on how well each of the 195 U.S. dioceses is complying with the provisions of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

The plan is to audit approximately 11 dioceses a week between late June and late October, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced in a May 29 statement.

No specific schedule of when dioceses would be audited was announced.

When the audits are completed, results will be sent to Kathleen McChesney, who heads the USCCB Office for Child and Youth Protection. Her office is charged with producing an annual public report on the

progress made in implementing the standards in the charter.

"This public report shall include the names of those dioceses/eparchies which, in the judgment of this office, are not in compliance with the provisions and expectations of this charter," according to the document approved overwhelmingly by the U.S. bishops last June. Eparchy is the formal name for an Eastern Catholic diocese.

The audits will not include an evaluation of the dioceses' pre-charter policies or actions, the USCCB said.

The Gavin Group, headed by William Gavin, an experienced compliance auditor formerly with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has been hired by the USCCB as consultants in the audit process.

The auditors underwent training May 19-22 for their on-site audits of

the compliance of dioceses with the standards of the charter.

Auditors will operate in teams of two, and no auditor who is Catholic will be permitted to audit his or her own diocese.

The completion of the report by McChesney's office and its submission to the National Review Board for approval are scheduled for the first part of December, the USCCB statement said.

The 13-member board, appointed by the conference president, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., is charged with approving "the annual report of the implementation of this charter in each of our dioceses/eparchies, as well as any recommendations that emerge from this review before the report is submitted to the president of the conference and published."

### ROPEX STAMP SHOW

Free admission

Fri. June 20, 10am - 6pm  
Sat. June 21, 10am - 5pm  
Sun. June 22, 10am - 4pm

### Webster Field House

Webster Thomas High School  
800 Five Mile Line Road  
off Route 104 Expressway

40 Dealers, stamps,  
covers, postcards, supplies,  
240 frames of exhibits,  
Youth Area, US and  
United Nations Post Offices

Phone: 585-621-1670

[www.geocities.com/rpastamps](http://www.geocities.com/rpastamps)



Bring this coupon for a  
free souvenir.

While supplies last.

Limit 1 per person.