

# HOW TO REPORT TO DIOCESAN AUTHORITIES

(Rev. 3 / 2015)

In addition to reporting to civil authorities, allegations of sexual abuse of minors committed by a *cleric or religious* are also reported to the Bishop or the Vicar General in person or by telephone at 409/924-4310 or 409/924-4303 respectively, then by mail at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, P. O. Box 3948 (710 Archie Street), Beaumont, TX 77704-3948 or by fax at 409/838-4511. All of the above actions should also be taken with regard to allegations of sexual abuse of minors by *lay church personnel* (including volunteers), but additionally a report should be made to the pastor of the parish, principal of the school, or the director in charge of the diocesan institution where the lay person functions.

To the extent possible, when reporting to civil authorities and to the Bishop or Vicar General, the person making the report should provide as much information as possible. Information to be reported to the Bishop or Vicar General is found on the form below.

All allegations reported to church authorities will be processed to the extent of the verifiable and specific information provided. Anonymous complaints that cannot be investigated due to lack of accompanying verifiable facts will be communicated to the accused, and, if a religious, to his/her religious superior. The consequences of false allegations cannot be overstated, since they involve injury to the innocent, loss of reputation, scandal to the Church and the larger community, and potential criminal investigation. Criminal, civil, and canon law provide penalties for knowingly reporting a false allegation.

The diocese will maintain confidentiality to the extent possible, consistent with civil reporting requirements and the diocese's policies and procedures. Care will always be taken to protect the privacy, reputation, and rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made (USCCB Norms, #13).

