

A CHURCH'S GUIDE TO

INVESTIGATING CLAIMS OF WRONGDOING

THE DIOCESE OF CHURCHES FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

In a world where **the vulnerable** continue to be exploited, the Church must **take action in safeguarding the physical, emotional and spiritual health of every person in its care.** When allegations of abuse, harassment, financial impropriety, etc., arise in a congregation, this guide provides clarity to the complex and difficult process of investigating those claims. The Church can then **better fulfill its God-given responsibility to nurture and protect his people.**

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WE MUST HOLD ONE ANOTHER ACCOUNTABLE TO CARE FOR THE LEAST OF THESE, AS WE SEEK TO LIVE OUT OUR KINGDOM MISSION FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

—BISHOP TODD HUNTER

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Anyone who has experienced, witnessed or heard about an incident of wrongdoing within the Diocese must report the incident to the C4SO Ombudsman **Kimberley Pfeiler within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident (469-766-1272).** If the reporter is unable to make contact with the Ombudsman in 24 hours, they should call (615-968-5348) and email (admin@c4so.org) the Diocesan office for assistance in connecting with her. The Ombudsman will help the victim or person who witnessed the wrongdoing begin the steps that might lead to an appropriate investigation. *A victim of abuse or harassment who is reluctant to take immediate action may understandably report at a later time.* The Ombudsman will direct the reporter to consult their state-specific requirements for reporting child abuse and reporting sexual harassment. Once the reporter has spoken to the Ombudsman, they will complete this Whistleblower Reporting Form to the best of their ability, documenting the incident.



C4SO Ombudsman Kimberley Pfeiler
Kimberley@c4so.org

NEXT STEPS

The steps that follow this initial conversation with the Ombudsman depend on a variety of factors, including the nature of the wrongdoing, the vulnerability of victims, and the position held by the accused. If the accused is an ordained presbyter or deacon, the Diocese may undertake an independent investigation. Since clergy come under the direct supervision of the Bishop, the Diocese typically completes this process from start to finish, unless the Bishop sees fit to recommend that a particular incident be resolved locally.

Similarly, any employees, staff and volunteers who work directly for the Diocese are subject to Diocesan investigation if a report of wrongdoing is made against them.

When allegations are made against employees or volunteers of the local congregation (other than clergy), the investigation will be administered at the local level, guided by the Diocesan Ombudsman or someone delegated by the bishop. All aspects of the response, including the selection and hiring of investigators, will be done at the local level in consultation with the insurance company of the local church. It is vital for congregations to purchase robust liability insurance that covers harassment claims. The insurance coverage maintained by the Diocese only covers acts by agents of the Diocese itself.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The cost of an investigation can be substantial, particularly when the facts are contested. For churches that can show financial hardship, the Diocese may be willing to provide a loan to help cover the cost of the investigation and keep ministries operating. However, the loan will not be considered an acceptance by the Diocese of liability for claims made against the direct agents of the local congregation. If you would like to request a loan, contact C4SO's Director of Administration at admin@c4so.org.

CONNECT WITH US.

Questions about investigating claims of wrongdoing? **Contact the Ombudsman at 469-766-1272.** In the event that you are unable to reach the Ombudsman, **contact the Diocesan office at 615-968-5348 or admin@c4so.org.**