



Frequently Asked Questions Catholic Diocese of Richmond Independent Reconciliation Program

Introduction

The following information contains answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) following the announcement of an Independent Reconciliation Program ("Program") by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Feb. 17, 2020. The questions are intended to answer concerns and provide additional information. Please click on the question to expand and collapse the answer.

For additional information about the Program, please visit the program website*.

**2/10/23 Update: The Program was closed October 15, 2020 and the IRP website is no longer available. The link to the program website has been removed.*

This FAQ will be updated as needed.

1) Why is Bishop Knestout authorizing the Independent Reconciliation Program and what does he hope to achieve?

Bishop Knestout is committed to helping victim survivors on their path of healing, from meeting with victim survivors to publishing the names of clergy against whom there is a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. Bishop Knestout recognizes that needs exist among victim survivors that current outreach practices may not address. This Program allows the diocese to offer another means of support for victim survivors. Bishop Knestout sees this Program as a natural extension of his promise to assist victim survivors.

2) What is an Independent Reconciliation Program?

As part of the commitment to offer assistance that facilitates healing for those who, as minors, experienced sexual abuse by its clergy, the Catholic Diocese of Richmond has established a voluntary Independent Reconciliation Program, which provides an opportunity for eligible victim survivors to receive a monetary payment.

3) Who can apply to the Program?

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond's goal is to help as many victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse as possible. Anyone who has experienced sexual abuse as a minor by clergy serving the diocese is encouraged to apply.



For additional information on eligibility criteria, please visit the Program's website*

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4) What resources are available for victim survivors of sexual abuse who are not eligible for the Program?

While the Program was designed specifically for individuals who, as a minor, were sexually abused by clergy serving in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, the diocese is committed to providing support for all individuals who experienced child sexual abuse within the context of the Church. Victim survivors are encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) to discuss other healing opportunities and programs available.

You can contact the VAC by email at vac@richmonddiocese.org or by phone via the confidential Victim Assistance Reporting Line at 1-877-887-9603.

5) Who is administering the Program?

The Program has been designed and will be administered by Lynn Crowder Greer and her firm, BrownGreer PLC ("Claims Administrator"), an independent and nationally recognized firm specializing in claims administration. Founded in 2002 and headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, BrownGreer has been involved in very significant resolution programs to include some of the largest and most complex claims resolution programs in history, such as the BP Oil Spill Program, the NFL Concussion Settlement Program, and the One October Settlement Fund for victims of the 2017 Las Vegas Shooting. BrownGreer has earned a nationwide reputation as an objective, fair and neutral Claims Administrator.

6) What is the process to submit a claim?

Submitting a claim is a two-step process. For specific details about submitting a claim and other questions on the process, please visit the Program's website*.

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Please note that the first step requires initiation of a claim on or before Monday, April 3, 2020.



7) When a victim survivor submits a claim, will his/her information be kept confidential? Does the individual sign a confidentiality agreement?

In keeping with the Catholic Diocese of Richmond's commitment to protect the privacy of victim survivors, the Claims Administrator will keep confidential information it receives from individuals participating in the Program, except as necessary to process the claim, reporting to the diocese so it may follow its Church processes, and complying with state or federal law, including any requirements of the Office of the Attorney General of Virginia.

The diocese will not require individuals to sign a confidentiality agreement. All individuals participating in the Program, even those who accept a monetary payment and sign a release, will forever retain the right to discuss their claim and their abuse.

8) If a victim survivor's claim contains an allegation not previously submitted to the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, may he/she still file a claim?

Yes. The diocese's intention is to help as many victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse as possible and encourage them to contact the Claim Administrator for inclusion in the Program. Individuals who, as part of their claim, submit a new allegation or provide new information about their allegation may be contacted by the VAC as part of the Church processes. The outcome of the Church process will have no bearing on the decisions made by the Claims Administrator. Church processes are independent of the Program.

9) What are victim survivors giving up by accepting a monetary payment from the Program?

If a victim survivor decides to accept a monetary payment from the Program, they will be required to sign a release. Thereafter, the victim survivor will give up the right to sue or receive any financial assistance from the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and the Claims Administrator. If the victim survivor was abused by clergy from another diocese or religious order, the diocese may request the other diocese or religious order to contribute to the monetary payment. In those cases, the individual may also give up the right to sue or receive financial assistance from the other diocese or religious order and its affiliates. The Claims Administrator will not participate in any contribution discussions and any such discussions will not affect its determination on the monetary amount offered to the victim survivor. A request for contribution will not conflict with the Program's deadlines.

Signing a release will not preclude a criminal investigation or prosecution against the alleged perpetrator.



10) What if a victim survivor does not want to participate in the the Program? Can he/she seek assistance for therapy or other help from the Catholic Diocese of Richmond?

Participation in the Program is voluntary. Victim survivors choosing not to participate in the Program can contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator for other assistance by email at vac@richmonddiocese.org, or by phone via the confidential Victim Assistance Reporting Line at 1-877-887-9603.

11) Do any diocesan representatives have input into how much money a victim survivor receives under the Program?

No. The Claims Administrator will decide the monetary amount of each claim independently and without input from any representatives of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, including the bishop of Richmond.

12) Besides offering this Program, what else is the Catholic Diocese of Richmond doing to help victim survivors heal?

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond provides financial support for counseling and other therapeutic interventions for individuals who have experienced child sexual abuse by clergy or other representatives of the diocese. In some instances, the diocese has provided financial support to individuals in areas other than counseling or therapeutic support.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator strives to compassionately and respectfully work with victim survivors through the disclosure process and act as a supportive presence and advocate throughout various Church and civil processes.

13) How is the Catholic Diocese of Richmond funding the Independent Reconciliation Program?

Bishop Knestout, working with his advisors including the Diocesan Finance Council, has identified several potential sources of funds for the Program, including the Catholic Diocese of Richmond's self-insurance program, investments, and loans as needed. The diocese will not use funds donated to the Annual Diocesan Appeal, the *Living Our Mission* campaign, or any donor restricted contributions or restricted endowments, including those in the Catholic Community Foundation and the McMahon-Parater Scholarship Foundation. The diocese will seek contributions from insurance companies, religious orders and other dioceses when appropriate.

14) How much money is reserved for this Program by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond?



Because it is not known how many claims will be filed, a specific amount of money has not been reserved. As indicated in the answer above, potential sources of funding have been identified.

15) How will this impact the Catholic Diocese of Richmond financially?

Because the cost of the Program is not known at this time, it is not possible to accurately estimate the financial impact to the Catholic Diocese of Richmond as a whole. The Program will require significant resources, and the diocese anticipates that operating budget adjustments will need to be made in the future as a result. The diocese is committed to financial transparency and a report on the results of the Program will be made at the Program's conclusion.

16) How will the Program affect the finances of our parishes, schools and other programs in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond?

The Program should not affect parish assets, school assets, including tuition, or other programs.

17) Can a victim survivor meet with someone at the Catholic Diocese of Richmond to discuss his/her claim?

During the Program, eligible victim survivors will be asked if he/she would like to meet with the Claims Administrator and if he/she would like to have a diocesan representative present at that meeting. If he/she accepts the invitation, arrangements will be made. Victim survivors are encouraged to accept this invitation to share their experiences in a face-to-face setting.

18) If an individual has trouble filling out the claim, who does he/she call?

The Program is independent of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. Individuals with questions or seeking assistance may contact the Claims Administrator's call center Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. EST. Accessibility accommodations will be available for those who require them.

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