

VICTIMS-SURVIVORS (11-95)

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON SEXUAL ABUSE

RESPONDING

TO

VICTIMS-SURVIVORS

NOVEMBER 1995

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INTRODUCTION

The Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse (AHCSA) is keenly aware that many vgbaspects of its mandate either directly or indirectly pertain to appropriate concern and care for the victim-survivor of sexual abuse. Some of its work has consisted of meetings with individual victims-survivors and with organizations representing a number of them. In its report Restoring Trust (November 1994) the section on diocesan policies is replete with references to the primary importance to be given to care for direct and indirect victims-survivors of clergy sexual abuse. In that same report were two articles relating to the care of victims-survivors which were especially commissioned by the committee for sharing with the bishops.

To carry out its mandate more fully as regards victims-survivors' concerns, this year the ad hoc committee decided to have an objective specifically focussed on this topic. Accordingly, a sub-committee was formed to develop some reflections for consideration by AHCSA. The individuals who made up this sub-committee were very much on the front line dealing with victims-survivors, and all had diocesan responsibilities in this regard. They contributed to the writing of various sections of the reflections which follow and for which the ad hoc committee is most grateful.

It is important to note that these reflections are not only or simply the product of the work of the subcommittee or of discussions within the ad hoc committee. Three other wonderful and very important people made an essential contribution: three individual victims-survivors of clergy sexual abuse generously agreed to write their respective stories and to respond to five important questions. All of sections one and six are what these three persons want to share with the bishops of the country. They were the first three victims-survivors approached by the subcommittee, and very openly - in the hope it would do some good for others - they agreed to make this contribution. The bishops on AHCSA express appreciation and gratitude for their generosity in sharing their stories.

AHCSA is aware that some dioceses in the country have rather elaborate resources in place for responding to the needs of victims-survivors. These will not likely find anything radically new in this report. However, it is hoped that these reflections will be of some assistance to the majority of dioceses in this area of pastoral concern.

SECTION ONE: TWO STORIES

One Victim-Survivor Story

One Saturday morning in the summer of 1961, after I served as his altar boy at early morning mass, the priest invited me into the rectory kitchen for milk and cookies . When I finished my snack, he asked me to join him in his office. I was a quiet, pious boy from a strict Catholic home. Vatican II was not yet on the horizon, so I felt honored, nervous, almost awed. Then the man who had taught me my prayers in Latin and heard my confession pulled me toward him and pushed me down onto the oriental carpet. As my face pressed against the floor, I felt the full force and weight of a man twice my size straddling my 70 pound frame.

Nothing in my experience or training had prepared me for such a moment. I had neither the psychological equipment nor the emotional maturity. At the age of ten, all I had to help me cope with crisis was a finely honed spiritual orthodoxy which had taught me right from wrong, black from white. As he pressed against me, I was guided by those strictures onto a merry-go-round of whirling thoughts: Father is good, Father is good, but this is wrong. He must good. He's a priest. My parents kneel before him. My teachers, the nuns, revere him. The people who sit next to us in the pews love him. This is wrong, but he is good. This is wrong, but he is good, so I must be bad. I must be evil.

It was a cataclysmic moment. From the time that Father zipped up his pants and ushered me out of the rectory door into my dad's black Oldsmobile until I groped my way back to personal redemption twenty years later, I lived in a black pit convinced of my own innate evil.

I could tell no one about that moment for to confess what had occurred would have been to confess my own wickedness. All I could do was to seek redemption. I prayed, confessed imaginary sins, made sacrifices and finally joined the Carmelites at the age 13. It didn't work. No matter how often I prayed to the Virgin for redemption, I still felt dirty, shameful and worthless.

I finally left home, going to college across the country - hoping that I could escape my soiled past. For a time, the structure of college helped me hold my life together. But once I graduated, unmoored both from my spiritual roots and from an external structure, I sank into a pattern of behavior that would reinforce all my feelings of worthlessness. I was tortured by depressions of utter darkness. I fell into sexual debauchery in search of someone, anyone, who would love an evil human being. I turned to drugs, liquor - anything that would wipe out the demons in my mind. I only wanted to feel numb. And I was. For the next eight

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years. I went from job to job, city to city, relationship to relationship in search of escape. Nothing enabled me to be someone else. I was jailed in my own skin by my own sense of wickedness.

I wound up homeless, alone, estranged from everyone, my family included. I had no idea what I was fleeing, but I knew I had only two choices - to end it all and die or to face the unknown with what tiny sliver of hope, of inner goodness I could conjure up inside me. Life had become as brittle as a dry brown paper bag. A speck of light shone through. That was enough. I hung on for dear life.

Sobriety was the first step. In October 1982, I entered an inpatient drug rehabilitation program. When I left, I embraced AA as my lifeline. I moved into a one-room basement apartment. I was terrified. I still didn't know why. I draped what few windows I had with blankets. For the next four years I lived huddled in that second womb.

Gradually, as I remade my life on the outside - to stay sober, to find a job, to rebuild a relationship with my family I began the long process of remaking myself on the inside. I found a therapist and started my search for the key to all I had been through. Why did I make such destructive choices? I couldn't figure it out. My twin brother lived a normal existence. He was happily married, had a productive career and a house in the suburbs. What the hell had happened to me? I searched.

Early in AA I had begun going to church. Each time I left in ever greater discomfort, with an unbridled, unfocused anger. One day I vaguely remembered what had happened in the priest's office that Saturday morning but I rationalized that such an insignificant event could not possibly have anything to do with how my life had turned out. The connection was a long time in coming. Gradually, freed of alcohol and drugs and empowered by the wisdom of my therapist, I looked back at that moment of terror and began to understand the thread: that the rape itself was not my undoing but the conclusion I drew from the priest's act, the conclusion that I was evil.

What I had brought to that horrific moment was careful training - the type of training strict Catholic parents gave to their children - in harsh judgements. That training brought to bear on a moment of enormous moral turbulence for a child had forced me into harsh self-judgment. It was by refocusing myself away from that training - away from harsh self-judgement - that I began the first in a long series of steps back to health and happiness. The key was not to redirect my judgements away from myself and onto the priest or the Church. That would have been easy, but it would not have been very effective. The priest wasn't the problem, nor was the Church. The problem was falling into easy judgements, the type of judgements I had been taught to make as a child. By suspending that tendency, I could

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begin to think of myself as worthy - and if I was worthy, it didn't follow that I would want to do anything self-destructive.

I admit that I had to rage, to grieve for the child who was destroyed that summer Saturday, to feel all that I had numbed for those twenty years. For awhile I was not any fun to be around! But after four years of building a firm base and reconstructing a self-shattered life, I could begin to take risks. I have never been one to be happy with the status quo. I moved from that one room into a row house. I shifted from a safe and unchallenging job into a career.

By January, 1990 I had all the accouterments of a successful businessman - an office, a car, a house. But there was a bitterness that seeped into my days. I knew it was time to forgive the priest. I could no longer empower him with my bitterness. I went to a local Catholic Church and sat with a priest and forgave the one who assaulted me. I freed myself once again from yet another link in an old, old chain.

During this entire experience, I never focused on the Church as my problem because I had no reason to believe that the Church even knew about my problems. Thus when my sister called one evening the following May to tell me that eight other survivors of that same priest had gone public, the dimensions of my abuse shifted dramatically. I discovered that half the kids I knew in grade school had also been abused. More importantly, I discovered the Church had known all along. That horrendous realization impelled me in a quest for justice along with more than 130 other of his survivors and then into a national leadership role in prodding the Church to begin its long journey to healing.

Today, I find myself in the post-trauma phase. I am a fully, functioning, healthy, happy human being. The scars are healed. But one legacy lingers. The spiritual realm is a significant and important part of my life, but it has no relationship to the Catholic Church. The hierarchy, for the most part, is still taking its first tentative steps on a long road through self-honesty and the assumption of responsibility. Until the Church demonstrates that it can be as honest as I can, it can claim no moral authority. For me, then, the Catholic Church that was such a central part of my youth is no longer a spiritual entity. It is a simple organization that has a long road to travel.

Another Victim-Survivor Story

This is my story as told at a public meeting in my parish.

I have been an active person in this parish from its beginning. Some of you people here know me, and of course for others this is a first encounter. But tonight I am going to share a part of my life that few people know. This is a dark, dry side of my life experience.

A year ago, I could not have stood up here like the woman at the well who returned to her people and told her experience of faith. But because I am beginning to find people, places and things that quench my thirst as Jesus did for the Samaritan woman, I am able to relate my story to all of you.

When I was a sophomore in high school, I was sexually abused by a priest who was my Latin teacher, basketball and volleyball coach, and parish priest. I was told by my predator not to tell anyone -- or else. So I remained silent and felt guilty during those three years of abuse. I suppressed this for many years until one evening at my nephew's wedding I found out that my sister had been abused by the same person. She asked me why I did not tell her, and I looked at her and asked, "Why me? Why didn't you tell me?"

Later, a friend told me about Link-Up, which is a Chicago-based support group for people who were sexually abused by clergy. This support group was holding a conference in the Chicago area, and she thought this would be good for me.

I attended the conference, and met a woman whom I had not seen since I had graduated from high school. She was also abused by the same person. We talked for a long time. Breaking the silence was starting.

Another high school classmate who was also abused by this priest decided to go with me to meet with the bishop from our hometown. After all these years, we told our stories. We requested two things:

1. That this priest be laicized so that no other person could be harmed by him...
2. ...and that he get psychological help so he could make peace with his God.

The bishop listened to us, thanked us, but said he could not promise anything, but would try and get him help.

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Time went on, but my life hit a deep low. I was extremely upset and didn't know what to do. I told my husband I was going to make an appointment with our parish priest. I went over to the parish house, and told my story to him. I cried for first time in my life about this. I thought I would never stop. The parish priest gave me some Kleenex and held my hand. Then he asked how he could help me. I finally admitted I needed professional help. I could not do this myself. He reached in his desk and gave me a card with a therapist's name who works with abused people. I thanked him and got into my car, and cried again. Someone who represents the church cares!!

After two years of therapy for which that other diocese is paying, I am on the road to healing and recovery.

Last year, the parish sponsored an evening of information on sexual and physical abuse. Several people came, and many questions were presented from "How do you find the right therapist?" to "How can I trust again?" One of the attendees, who was abused by a relative, just called me a couple of months ago, and revealed to me that she is now getting professional help, and thanked me. She is on the road to healing.

Our parish will again offer another evening for information concerning abuse this April.

One Tuesday, I didn't go skiing because the weather did not cooperate. I was disappointed, and showed it -- my poor husband! But something happened later that morning. I got a phone call from a mutual friend of ours of many years. She is worried about her 40 year old daughter who is so depressed she cries all the time; she can't even decide what to wear each morning. She even quit her job. Classic signs of depression. I asked my friend to listen to my story; then I questioned her if her daughter was ever sexually abused years ago. A long pause . . .yes, and so was she. I asked if it would be OK if I wrote to her daughter and sent her some articles that might help to encourage her to seek professional help. A big yes. A few weeks ago, she called my husband and told him after going to several different therapists, her daughter now has a professional that she is comfortable with. Another person is on that recovering and healing road.

I receive articles, book lists, and newsletters from other survivors of sexual abuse. Now I know this sounds crazy, but it seems people know when to call, because when I get these phone calls, it just happens I can use these articles or newsletters to help another victim/survivor.

The network of support reaches out to the five or six surrounding states.

If it wasn't for my husband, my understanding parish priest, and another priest friend, and my therapist, other survivors of sexual abuse, the organization called Link-Up, and a newsletter called "The Healing Woman", my faith in God would have run dry. They are the Jesus giving me a drink . God is touching and healing us.

When life and my faith get hard and dry for me and for others who are victim/survivors, I know a sign from God -- either by a phone call, a letter, or a hug -- will come. The well is not dry.

Note: Sections two to six deal with some practical reflections on how to provide appropriate care for victims. In Section Seven three victims respond to five key questions. Two of the victims responding to these questions have just presented their stories in Section One above.

SECTION TWO: A COORDINATED AND SENSITIVE RESPONSE

Whenever an allegation of clergy sexual misconduct is brought forward, the Church is called to respond in a pastoral and timely fashion: to the victim-survivor, to the family, and to others who have been affected by the allegation. Ideally such a pastoral response would involve 1) a person or team with clear and definite responsibilities, 2) effective internal coordination of diocesan resources, and 3) smooth external relationships.

1. A Delegate or Team for Responding to Victims-Survivors

Since matters involving sexual misconduct are often overwhelming for the victim-survivor, the pastoral response can be complex, usually unfolding in a climate of urgency and public scrutiny. Therefore, it is important that the bishop have a permanent arrangement in place - an authorized delegate or team - capable of rapid initiation and coordination of the outreach efforts appropriate to the situation.

Having such a delegate or team in place enables the bishop himself to be available to all persons involved and to all aspects of the situation. It allows him to be the overseer and monitor of the diocesan response to the needs. Having named such a delegate/team in no way implies that the bishop would not be available for direct pastoral contact with the victims-survivors, their families, and others as circumstances might warrant.

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The delegate and staff serving a victim-survivor need to be well informed regarding diocesan structures, policies and protocols. This background assures that they will be in position to guide and assist effectively those who come forward to disclose their abuse and victimization.

It is important to note that the delegate/team serving the victim-survivor does not focus on the question of innocence or guilt but rather concentrates on the hurt and pain experienced by the person naming the abuse. The delegate/team assists persons coming forward to obtain information so that they can make responsible and informed decisions regarding their care and healing. Pastoral outreach to a victim-survivor often implies a long-term relationship.

2. Internal Coordination

Coordination of effort is an indispensable element in a diocesan pastoral plan for responding to an allegation of sexual misconduct. Internal coordination aims at timely and appropriate decisions made in the best interest of all. It also assures well-timed implementation and efficient use of diocesan resources. The pastoral response does not operate in a vacuum: it often interacts, for instance, with those responsible for finances, for insurance, for the canon and civil law aspects of the process, and for public and media relations. In these relationships there may well be tensions. Coordination, however, implies that timely advice and consultation are available to responsible diocesan persons as they react to the many demands that arise throughout the processing of an allegation and beyond.

The following are examples of diocesan offices or agencies that are to be coordinated in responding to an allegation.

(Titles may vary from diocese to diocese but the positions indicate the responsibilities that have to be met.)

- . Bishop or Delegate
- . Delegated person receiving and investigating the allegation
- . Delegate for pastoral outreach to victim-survivor, the family, the parish community
- . Parish Intervention Representative
- . Vicar for Priests
- . Director of Diocesan Personnel
- . Legal Counsel
- . Insurance Carrier
- . Communications Office (Public Relations)

Wherever and whenever possible it is important that the victim-survivor access to the delegate/team be at a site separate from a diocesan administration center. The site should be such that a victim-survivor would not likely encounter other Church personnel. Incidentally, this same sensitivity applies to the use of therapists. It has happened that the victim-survivor and the accused have met in the same therapist's waiting room.

Another delicate point that could be important: attention should be given to the decor of the office of the delegate. Religious symbols, pictures of church personnel, could be a source of upset for victims-survivors in their very early stages of disclosure. The overall atmosphere of the delegate's office should express a sense of privacy and of welcome.

It is widely acknowledged that a response plan should be in place well in advance of an allegation being brought forward. To attempt to organize "coordinating systems" once the crisis is upon a diocese demands a herculean effort and drains energy and resources away from the immediate matters that require focused attention.

3. External Relationships

The primary mission of pastoral outreach is to promote the wholeness and healing of the victim-survivor and of the family. The need for timely, appropriate, compassionate, and consistent interaction with the abused cannot be overstated. A secondary mission is to identify quality resources available to the abused persons, and, as indicated, to coordinate and monitor the services they receive.

Depending on the needs and requests of each victim-survivor, the delegate responsible for pastoral outreach interacts with a broad spectrum of people. The primary contacts include counselors, therapists, and spiritual directors. In addition, the delegate maintains communication with other support persons and organizations serving victims-survivors, including advocacy groups.

While respecting the abused person's right to privacy, balanced with the right to be kept informed, the delegate maintains communication with the victim-survivor and the family

Finally, the delegate may be in communication with diocesan social service agencies and as well as with a parish when crisis interventions are called for. (See the sections in this report on "The Therapeutic Community: Networking" and on "Extended Victim-Survivor Communities".)

Conclusion

The coordinating role of the delegate/team responsible for pastoral outreach to a victim-survivor calls for prudence, sensitivity, and courage. It is a developing role very dependent on the lived experiences and the resources of a given diocese. The observations offered in this section are based on reflections by and discussions with people who are on the front line of this ministry. No sample job descriptions are offered. Hopefully elements in such a job description may be seen in the comments offered in this paper.

An appropriate conclusion might be the following quotation from a diocesan policy concerning victims-survivors; it too has ingredients for a description of the role of a delegate/team for pastoral outreach to these wounded persons:

We are open and respect your complaint.
We will provide an advisor/advocate, if you so choose.
We will help you obtain counseling support.
We will provide information about support groups.
We will help you obtain spiritual direction.
We will help you bring your concern to the proper church officials
outside our diocese.

SECTION THREE: THE THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY: NETWORKING

Introduction

Church officials have ample opportunity to work with and refer to an often broad network of psychotherapists in a given locale. These trained individuals are really co-laborers with Church professionals in the ministry of healing. They provide a depth of help to people, who are sometimes deeply wounded, that is beyond what Church professionals can do. At the same time, psychotherapists are limited in the art and science which underpins what they can do. Collaboration, then, is an optimum condition where professionals in both groups can combine talents and skills for better service to those in need. What follows are reflections on how to identify resources and maintain connections between the care giving professionals and the Church officials.

When sexual misconduct involves priests, or deacons or Church workers and those to whom they minister, be it by harassment, exploitation or abuse, the victims of this behavior suffer a profound dislocation of a basic condition of life best expressed by the cry: Who on earth can I trust! This can have a ripple effect and lead to a lack of confidence in other conditions of life required for most people to function well. When such a breach of trust has been made by a minister of the Gospel, the victims of that breach in all probability will need the help of a psychotherapist in healing. And their families, too.

The Church has a pastoral mission: to accompany people on their journey of faith, to be present to their life experiences, and to show believers how to turn their lives over to God's saving work in them and in the community of faith which is the Church. When Church officials refer victims of sexual misconduct to psychotherapists, a good rule of thumb is that this is not the same as disposing of a problem for else to work on. The Church's ministry to the victim-survivor remains. Psychotherapists are additional resource persons who, in attaining their objectives, will at the same time be helping the Church achieve its mission. Our primary outreach however is to the victim-survivor, not to the therapist. Therefore in these situations Church officials need to keep doing what the Church does best: being pastoral. No one else can take its place.

An important feature to bear in mind is that there is a difference between being therapist and being advocate. A good therapist knows this and makes quite an effort to avoid becoming an advocate for the client. Once a therapist takes on the role of advocate, pushing for the position of the client in external matters, the therapist has lost his/her perspective and is siding with the client. Maintaining perspective is essential for the therapeutic process and is one of the chief contributions to the therapy made by the professional. Its loss can turn therapy into co-miseration.

Various Credentials of Psychotherapists

Like people in general, psychotherapists come in various sizes, shapes, kinds, backgrounds, schools of thought, and levels of training. Like other groups, some are terrific, many are ordinary, some are not very good. So how does one pick a therapist? Some people, it is said, use the Yellow Pages. Hard to imagine selecting a surgeon that way. The therapeutic relationship is one of healing, but at its roots it still is a relationship. When one is part of the selection process of a potential therapist or number of therapists for a specific victim-survivor, people's needs and characteristics have to be taken into account. The client has to get a sense of the relationship with a particular therapist and to feel that it would "click" between them.

Some relevant factors concerning psychotherapists in general:

1. Disciplines: There are currently five mental health disciplines recognized by the federal government and many states: Marriage and Family Therapy, Psychiatric Nursing, Psychiatry, Psychology, and Social Work. Each of these disciplines has a history, a culture, a characteristic way of viewing people and problems, a code of ethics, a body of knowledge and research. To be sure they borrow heavily from one another, and even more importantly are often members of the same team. They complement each other. But some generalizations can be made. For example, psychiatrists are trained first as physicians, with a traditional emphasis on understanding the biological basis of behavior. They treat people in hospitals and clinics and use medication in the treatment of many psychiatric disorders. Some also do psychotherapy. We recognize that there are individual variations among members of any group. The point is that one has to ask individual practitioners just what their areas of expertise and/or practice are and then look for matching credentials.

2. Levels of Education: All members of the above disciplines are trained at the graduate level, that is, formally educated beyond college or university bachelor's degree, some with a master's and many with doctorates. As a general rule those who have earned master's degrees have training which has focused on psychotherapy. Those with doctoral level training not only have further academic qualifications but also additional supervised clinical experience in areas such as formal assessment and diagnosis of psychiatric disorders.

3. Sites of Education and/or Training: Usually graduate schools approved by regional accrediting agencies are the ones deemed acceptable both by the professional community and the state licensing boards. Independent training facilities likewise need accreditation and often obtain it from the respective professional associations, such as an American Psychological Association (APA) approved internship program for doctoral level trainees.

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4. State Regulation: States regulate the practice of all psychotherapists. Some states loosely regulate by way of restricting who can use a certain title, such as Certified Social Worker, or Certified Psychologist. Only those in a discipline who meet specified minimum requirements of education and supervised clinical training and who pass written and oral examinations under state auspices can use the title. Other states regulate by use of licensure which usually defines an area of practice. Only those who possess the minimum requirements of education and supervised clinical training and who pass written and oral examinations under state auspices can perform the activities in the defined area.

States have regulatory boards governing the professionals and the information they have is open to the public. One can call these boards to find out whether a given individual possesses a state credential, which one, and other types of information. In some states the regulatory boards are located in the Commerce Department, in others the Health Department, or elsewhere. But it is on the state level that one must seek the information.

5. Specialization: This is a more difficult area to describe because the definitions of specialties and the manner by which one qualifies to be considered a "specialist" in the mental health field are not at all clear or agreed upon. At present, there is no universal and certain way to tell. One might be left with simply asking the professional, especially by inquiring as to just what basis has been used to determine specialization. If a doubt arises, one can check with the state board or the state professional association involved.

6. Professional Associations: Each of the five disciplines (see list above) has a corresponding professional association, membership in which can be gained only if basic requirements have been fulfilled. These requirements include minimum graduate accredited education and approved supervised clinical training. The association may have graded levels of membership, each higher one requiring even higher levels of training and education. These memberships are another way of credentialing a professional. These associations also hold their members to a strict code of ethics, as do the state regulatory boards.

Professional Assistance for Victims-Survivors

Healing is often a life-long process. An individual's needs can and do change over time. Within the healing process, psychotherapy will have objectives and goals which may be more time limited, and in that sense can and will come to an end. As regards victims-survivors it is possible that when the therapeutic work around the abuse is completed, the individual may want to pursue other areas that have been identified for resolution. The Church may then no longer be involved in any financial support for this extended care, but the therapeutic relationship may well continue, since it is something now primarily between the therapist and the client.

What does the diocese have a right to know when it refers a victim to a therapist? Some very basic things like, whether or not the person shows up for appointments; what is the initial assessment and evaluation; what is the therapist's plan for addressing the particulars of the assessment; what are the diagnosis and prognosis (prospect for recovery); and as the client moves along in the process, whether there is a periodic re-assessment and update of the treatment plan. Even armed with this information, a diocese may be puzzled as to what to make of it. In those situations, one could ask a body like a diocesan review board or its equivalent, with mental health professionals members, to render an opinion as to the appropriateness of the assessment and plan. Or one could also ask the victim-survivor to agree to have an independent assessment by another professional, whose opinion about the initial assessment, treatment goals and plan could then be sought.

Some Practical Applications

In the light of the above observations, what is the first step in selecting a psychotherapist or a number of psychotherapists to work with?

1. It is best to have a number of suggestions to make to the victim-survivor, the people we serve, and let them make the final choice of therapist. Giving a victim-survivor this decision is itself therapeutic, especially since the abuse may well have involved choice on the part of the perpetrator, but the experience of coercion on the part of the victim-survivor. One can try to match therapists and clients, but that is essentially a guessing game. Our best resource is common sense. A cold, analytical, very intellectualized therapist may not work well with someone who needs nurturing, but one can be surprised.

2. Ask the victims whether they have a preference for a male or female therapist. If someone finds it easier to talk with one or the other, particularly given the content of sexual behavior, providing the option can be important.

3. The really best way to know which therapists are effective is by experience, your own and others. A master's level licensed clinical social worker may well be a terrific therapist. Experience is a great indicator. One can ask around, develop a list, and acquire some experience by trial and error.

4. Therapists in the region may be asked whether they are interested in working with victims-survivors of clergy sexual misconduct and/or their families. They can be asked to tell you something about their background, their methods, their approach to this problem, their experience in dealing with it, and the number of clients cared for.

Those who respond to this inquiry will be far fewer than those who express a general interest in referrals. Following this survey the number of therapists will likely be more manageable and further background may then be developed on them. Where possible, one should avoid over-reliance on too narrow a number of professionals in order to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interest, their too close identification with the diocese. It is in the victim-survivor's best interest for the therapist to remain independent, including some distance from even other diocesan responsibilities.

5. Since referral by the diocese does not mean the Church's losing touch with the victim-survivor, it is important to know whether a therapist is willing to work with the diocese and does not insist on no contact or relationship with Church officials. Victims-survivors who have been referred for help need to know that the Church is continuing to be interested in their welfare. This attention, for instance, may take the form of meeting with the therapist and client together in the therapist's office to learn how things are progressing. This does not mean of course needing to know details of the person's life or intruding on the therapeutic process. But the diocese needs to be sure the therapy is on target and to know when it may be reasonably finished.

Progress in therapy could be indicated by the victim seeing that the sexual abuse is not the cause for every impairment felt in the person's life. The individual's taking responsibility for other matters to be resolved might go hand in hand with the person assuming more of the cost of the therapy. But this is a very particular question and is best resolved by all three parties together: client, therapist, and diocese. After all is said and done, when all the professionals (including attorneys and courts) have stepped away, the people involved - victim-survivor (and family), perpetrator (and family), parish community, officials - are still Church together.

Additional Considerations

1. In some situations fees for therapy for a victim-survivor and the family are seen as "advances", to be repaid from any settlements agreed on, especially if this is understood ahead of time.
2. Therapy with a victim-survivor of sexual abuse can take a long time. Two years is not unusual for some. Much depends on the nature and duration of the abuse and, particularly, its meaning and impact on the individual, the presence of other problems, immunizing experiences, and the resiliency of the personality.

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3. One way for the diocese to maintain a presence in the therapeutic process is to agree to a series of a specific number of sessions to be funded. At the end the client, the therapist, and the diocese then plan the next stage, which might be another series of an agreed upon length. It is most important that clear-cut, possibly measurable goals are in place so that progress towards them can be seen. This is considered sound therapeutic practice.
4. The confidentiality of the therapeutic process is acknowledged. However, it is important to identify for clients the type, scope, and purpose of the communication which might be needed between the diocese and the therapist, and to obtain written consent.
5. It is helpful to have on hand a list of other types of resources for use by victims. Such resources would include information about support groups in their area, opportunities for spiritual direction, and advocacy groups, complete with names, addresses, telephone numbers and contact persons.

Conclusion

The therapeutic community for the care of victims-survivors of sexual abuse in the Church involves interaction between competent professionals and Church officials on behalf of those who have been so abused. Reflections in this section have concentrated on some facets of this interaction. Many other aspects of Church ministry also respond to events surrounding the disclosure of sexual misconduct. Few of these aspects can be as critically important for the healing of abused, however, as the professional care they receive on the road to recovery. Collaboration therefore between these professionals and Church officials is not only not an option, it is a common mission on behalf of very vulnerable persons placed in the care of the Church in a special way.

SECTION FOUR: INTERVENTION WITH EXTENDED VICTIM AUDIENCES

Introduction

The impact of sexual abuse within the Church is felt not only by the direct victims of the abuse but also by "extended victims." These extended victims include parish communities, family of direct victims, family of the alleged/actual perpetrator, the larger social community. The Church's response to allegations or incidents of sexual abuse involves pastoral outreach and compassionate care for these extended victims as well as for the direct victims. While the Church will utilize a variety a means in responding to and caring for victims-survivors, all that we do will be marked by a spirit of care and an attitude of prayerful trust in the presence of God even in the midst of pain and suffering. Care and attention to victims is a long-term commitment on the part of Church leadership

and community. Circumstances will vary and responses may need to be tailored to address individual situations. In most cases a one-time response will not be sufficient; the Church will need to provide opportunities for a long-term and varied presence in addressing the needs of the extended victim community.

Reaction to allegations or incidents of sexual abuse include a wide range of emotions from shock, denial and disbelief to anxiety, guilt and embarrassment. Blame and anger can be directed both outwardly toward perpetrators, victims, and Church authorities as well as inwardly toward oneself. These emotional reactions not only arise from individuals but also are expressed communally. Issues can surface as personal, relational, or religious crises.

In providing care for its people, the Church attends to these diverse needs. Because the needs vary and the audiences differ, certain principles for response will precede any concrete decision regarding intervention. Issues taken into account will include concern for appropriate levels of confidentiality regarding the identity of the victim or victims, balance between right to access to information and danger of "prejudging" cases, protection of victims (direct and extended) from further victimization by community or unwanted media exposure. Special attention will also need to be given to the selection of pastoral personnel who will serve in a parish where an incident of sexual abuse has occurred in the past.

Process for Intervention and Response

While the responses to individual situations will vary, the following steps will help define and target appropriate intervention approaches:

- ° Identify target populations
 - Parish in which incident occurred
 - Parish school children
 - Religious education participants
 - Youth
 - Parish(es) where perpetrator previously served
 - Parish staff
 - Family of current and past victim(s)
 - Family of perpetrator
 - Local community
- ° Assess needs of each target population
- ° Determine response strategies and interventions
 - Dissemination of information
 - Consultations
 - > diocesan resource personnel
 - > local social service agencies
 - > local ecumenical leadership
 - Group meetings
 - > parish staff
 - > parish leadership
 - > parish community
 - > surrounding social community

- > children / youth
- Appropriate and effective use of media
- ° Identify roles and timetables

Utilizing Networks for Intervention

Diocesan leadership does well to utilize the existing leadership persons and groups at the parish level to assess needs and provide effective intervention. Professionals can be used for consultation, education, guidance and support both with and for parish leadership. These professionals can be drawn from diocesan personnel as well as from the larger community. Since the local parish does not exist in isolation from its surrounding social community, the Church can enlist the help of community social service agencies and mental health professionals as partners in its response. Because the effects of allegations or incidents of sexual abuse extend beyond the Catholic parish community, interaction through ecumenical contacts can also help serve the needs of the larger community.

While making effective use of local parish staff and leadership systems, diocesan personnel will also be aware that these people are part of the extended victim group, even as they function as resources to the parish community and/or to family members of both victim and perpetrator. Parish leadership and staff experience the mixed roles of being needed and needy, healer and wounded, comforting and broken.

An allegation or incident of sexual abuse can often elicit strong responses from members of the community who are themselves victims of abuse. By promoting an atmosphere and attitude that is accepting, empathic, and non-judgmental the Church can encourage such "hidden victims" to come forward and access avenues of pastoral care that exist for their benefit. Because the relationship of the victim with the Church may be wounded, thus impeding direct contact with Church personnel, referrals to county or community services may also be beneficial.

When media coverage or other public exposure highlights an incident of sexual abuse within the Church, parish communities or other extended victims from a previous such incident may experience a new set of emotions or a recurrence of their previous reactions. Attention to their needs in the current situation may be warranted. Likewise, even though a current incident may focus attention in a particular parish or community, the possibility exists that direct or extended victims may surface from sites of previous assignments of the perpetrator.

Interventions and responses will vary based on individual circumstances and resources available. What will remain constant is the Church's mission to those who are in need.

Allegations or incidents of sexual abuse often challenge, at very deep levels, trust in God, in the Church, in those who minister. Provided promptly, honestly, compassionately, and openly, the Church's response to extended victims can be a first step in rebuilding systems of trust.

(The following five appendices are practical aids relating to this section on extended victim audiences.)

APPENDIX #1

Principles and Approaches for Interaction between Diocesan Resource Personnel and Parish Staff/Leadership

These principles and approaches for interaction are grounded in a spirit of care and an attitude of prayerful trust in the presence of God even in the midst of pain and suffering.

I. Diocesan personnel serve primarily a support and resource function in relation to parish staff and leadership.

- a) Education and formation in issues relating to sexual abuse and its aftermath are part of ongoing programs for parish personnel and leadership, that is, prior to any definite incident or event at a specific parish.
- b) Already existing systems for communication and ministry within a parish serve as natural vehicles for attending to specific needs related to an incident of sexual abuse with diocesan resources serving in supplemental or adjunct capacities.
- c) Diocesan resource personnel assist parish staff and leadership in deciding on approaches rather than making all decisions for them

II. In the aftermath of an incident of sexual abuse at a parish, diocesan personnel and resources provide ministry to the ministers.

- a) Opportunities for parish staff and leadership to assess and respond to their own reactions will help prepare them for attending to the needs of the parish at large
- b) Diocesan resource personnel are trained to respond to and address the range of emotional reactions present among parish staff and leadership.
- c) The ability of parish leaders to respond to local crisis is enhanced when diocesan leaders, not excluding episcopal leadership, are available and responsive to their needs.

III. Advance planning and assignment of specific functions among diocesan personnel facilitates intervention with parish leadership.

- a) Clear delineation of areas of responsibility (e.g. interim personnel assignments, media relations) among members of a diocesan intervention team helps to focus the response being provided at the parish and to minimize additional stress.

- b) A "checklist" of possible interventions and decisions ensures that potentially important areas of response are not overlooked in the crisis of the moment (Appendix # 5).
- c) Contact between designated diocesan personnel and parish leadership can minimize the possibility of mixed/contradictory messages as well as maximize the (re)building of trust.

APPENDIX # 2

Developing an Action Plan at the Local Level

Step 1: Identify target populations.

- What groups / individuals in this community have specific or generalized needs in the aftermath of this incident?

- _____ Known victims and families
- _____ Yet-to-be known victims and families
- _____ Members of the victim group (e.g. grade school age children, teens)
- _____ School/religious ed staff/participants
- _____ General parish community
- _____ Civic community
- _____ Accused/perpetrator and family
- _____ Other(s) - identify:

Step 2: Identify needs of each target group.

- ° Information
- ° Forum for reaction
- ° Opportunity for prayer/ritual
- ° Direct intervention/referral

Step 3: Plan appropriate interventions for each group and its need(s).

- Examples:
- direct contact with victim(s)/family members
 - classroom discussions(parish/public school/CCD)
 - parish-wide communication and updates
 - open forum for parish members / civic community
 - small group sessions
 - prayer opportunities / liturgical sensitivity

Step 4: Assign roles and responsibilities.

Step 5: Assess ongoing needs as they develop and plan for long-range and follow-up support.

APPENDIX # 3

Tools for Effective Use of Media in a Crisis

Effective use of media in a crisis situation demands that certain approaches and procedures be developed in advance.

The size of the diocese, the scope of media presence in the area, and the nature of the incident will affect media policy. Certain key questions will need to be addressed in almost all situations:

- 1) What information do we need to get into the hands of the public via the media? e.g., What factual information regarding the incident can be disclosed at this time? What plans are underway to address needs and concerns of the parish/community? How do other victims make contact with the Church or other social agencies?
- 2) Who shall serve as spokesperson(s) with the media on behalf of the diocese? parish? How will information be provided to the spokesperson(s)?
- 3) How shall parish personnel and leadership be prepared for the impact of media involvement?

The diocese and parish needs to be aware of the impact of media reports on direct and extended victims especially when their reports precede intervention efforts. Media needs to be used effectively and not regarded automatically as the opposition. If media becomes obstructive to the healing processes, alternative approaches may be needed.

NOTE: See article on a media plan in Restoring Trust (November 1994), a report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse given to all NCCB members.

APPENDIX # 4

Fostering Community and Ecumenical Networks for Response

The effects and aftermath of an incident of sexual abuse within the Church are not limited to the Church. The surrounding civic and ecumenical community will also be affected. Outreach to leadership in these communities can extend the circle of healing and provide valuable resources for use by the Church.

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Decisions about contacts to be made will depend on the unique circumstances of the incident, e.g., an allegation of current abuse as opposed to one far in the past. Those who could be contacted and the purpose for the contact or role to be played could include the following:

Contact	Purpose	Role to be played
Social service agency	Provide information about the incident; professional interaction; referrals to and from diocese	Resource persons to assist in local responses
Ministerial network	Prepare for possible impact on their religious community.	Support
Public school officials	Prepare for possible "acting out" on part of students due to stress, anger, fear; explain approaches being taken	Appropriate to educational and counseling professionals; conduit of information/referrals

APPENDIX # 5

Sample Checklist for Emergency Action/Intervention

I. Convening of Emergency Team

Upon notification that an incident of clergy sexual abuse has been alleged or occurred the Chancellor will convene a team to respond to the emergency. The bishop will be notified about the meeting.

Those to be convened:

- Vicar for Clergy _____
- Priests Personnel Director _____
- Media Relation Director _____
- Coordinator of response _____

Depending on the nature of the case other persons may also be convened in this initial meeting (e.g., parish consultant for affected area, office director, etc.)

Other persons contacted: _____

Date, place, and time of meeting communicated to each of the above at time of contact.

II. Development of Approaches

A. Designate contact person(s) for additional incoming calls on same case and determine appropriate response at time of initial call.

Contact person: _____ Phone: _____

Response: _____

B. Decide if parish/institution intervention is needed.

Contact pastor/pastoral staff of affected parish with advance notice.

_____ Yes _____ No

Who is contacted? _____

By whom? _____

What is to be said? _____

Send diocesan representative/team to parish for coordination of on site response.

----- Yes ----- No

Who is sent? _____

Role: _____

Prepare announcement for communication with parish leadership/full parish.

_____ Yes _____ No

Who prepares? _____

Summary of content: _____

Provide intervention team for parishioners.

----- Yes ----- No

Team members:

Role:

Provide intervention team in parish school.

_____ Yes _____ No

Team members:

Role:

C. Determine public response(s).

Who will act as diocesan spokesperson with media? _____

Will a formal statement from the diocese/bishop be prepared?

_____ Yes _____ No

When? -----

By whom? _____

Need to be checked with legal counsel?

Yes ----- No

When? _____

By whom? _____

Contact with sheriff/district attorney needed?

_____ Yes _____ No

By whom? _____

Contact with social services of the area needed?

_____ Yes _____ No

By whom? _____

Contact with other public agencies needed?

_____ Yes _____ No

By whom? _____

Contact with ecumenical leaders in the area?

_____ Yes _____ No

Who? _____

By whom? _____

II. Other Interventions

What:

By whom:

When:

SECTION FIVE: ADVOCACY GROUPS

A primary goal within the Church is to be attentive to the needs of victims-survivors of clergy sexual abuse as they seek to achieve personal healing. As part of that healing a number of victims-survivors have formed support or advocacy groups of various kinds at the local, regional, and national levels.

On several occasions over the past two years, the NCCB Ad Hoc Committee has met with two of these groups operating at the national level. The committee has reflected on this experience and concluded that for these meetings to have their optimum effect for all participants it would be useful to have certain guidelines. One of the main purposes of the guidelines would be to help promote an atmosphere characterized by active listening, compassion, integrity, humility, and frankness.

For meetings with victims-survivors organizations that are national in character the Ad Hoc Committee has developed its own guidelines. The committee will attempt to follow these in future meetings that may take place. In outline they are:

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1. With the purpose clearly specified, a request for a meeting originates either with the president of the victims-survivors organization or with the chairperson of AHCSA.
2. At a reasonable time prior to the formal meeting, one or two representatives from the advocacy organization and from AHCSA staff hold a preparatory session. Some of the points covered in this session could include:
 - 2.1 Date, agenda and schedule
 - 2.2 Spokespersons/bishops/consultants/staff attending
 - 2.3 Review of accountability of spokespersons and of AHCSA
 - 2.4 Expectations
 - 2.5 Role and choice of possible facilitator
 - 2.6 Media plans
 - 2.7 Expense arrangements
- 3 Following the meeting AHCSA evaluates the session and draws whatever conclusions for follow up that may be indicated.

SECTION SIX: DIOCESAN POLICIES

Note

One of the objectives of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse is to provide some resource material relating to care for victims. One resource, among many, is the Committee's report on the diocesan policies, specifically what that report says about the care and concerns of the victim-survivor. The team assisting the Ad Hoc Committee on the "Victims' Objective" felt that providing a selection of material from the report on policies in **Restoring Trust** would be one way to emphasize the caring tone of much of this material without alluding to the procedural complexities necessary in the full text of the report.

Introduction

In 1994 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' (NCCB) Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse studied 157 diocesan policies on sexual misconduct that are in place across the country. Many of the recommendations in the Committee's report on these policies to all of the bishops dealt in some way with the victim of sexual abuse.

The highlights given below, focused on victims-survivors, are drawn from the Ad Hoc Committee's November 1994 Report on Diocesan Policies in **Restoring Trust**.

NCCB Principles

Throughout much of the report on diocesan policies the Ad Hoc Committee made direct reference to principles contained in specific policies on a variety of topics. However, there is a collective position taken by NCCB members that obviously has had great influence in the evolution of the policies, namely, the five principles that came out of the June 1992 NCCB General Meeting.

Three of these five principles relate directly to victims:

- * Respond promptly to all allegations of abuse where there is reasonable belief that abuse has occurred.**
- * Reach out to the victims and their families and communicate sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.**
- * Within the confines of respect for privacy of the individuals involved, deal as openly as possible with the members of the community.**

General Guidelines

Here is a sample of some general guidelines usually found in the introduction of selected policies, or in the presentation of the policy by the bishop.

Every society esteems its children. In their innocence a society recognizes its own innate goodness and its calling to build a better world. In their incompleteness a society understands that hope for a fuller life and second chances is never extinguished. This is no less true for the Church.

The common mission of all of us is to be holy. A holy people will not allow one of its members to be a victim of sexual misconduct.

All human suffering as well as the weaknesses and imperfections of human beings deserve a response rooted in love, compassion, and concern.

All disciples of Jesus Christ, all persons directly or indirectly involved with incidents of child abuse are to act with honesty, charity and confidence in the Lord's power to forgive and to heal. There is a need for the entire church to create an atmosphere where silence, ignorance and minimization are overcome by understanding, Christian love, and mutual respect.

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Since the principal attitudes that shine through many of the policies are compassion and accountability, diocesan policies can be a practical public means to approach the matter of sexual abuse within the Church. The very tone of the document can be an effective instrument to convey these attitudes.

Before dealing with detailed procedural points, policies generally have introductory comments to put into context what follows. Many of these comments have a direct bearing on caring for the victim. Here are some examples.

The intent of all that follows is to promote a ministerial environment in which those who minister in the church and those who receive the church's services can expect to do so in safety.

The primary purpose of the policy is the safety of children, the well-being of the community, and the integrity of the Church.

All involved are to be treated with candor, fairness, and dignity.

These policies and procedures are to be implemented with justice and equity; they shall also be fair and responsive to the pastoral needs of the victim, the victim's family, the parish community and diocesan community and to all other persons.

Retaliation and/or discrimination against any person who complains of or who reports sexual misconduct is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

The general tenor of these comments implies that the response of the diocese to any allegation of sexual misconduct must be based in the gospel values of dignity, compassion, and understanding. Justice and charity call the Church to respond with compassion and fairness to the persons involved and to uphold the integrity of the Church's witness and ministry.

From general information available, the NCCB Ad Hoc Committee is aware that a fair number of allegations are raised regarding acts that supposedly happened in the distant past. Obviously the needs in different dioceses are quite varied, but there seems to be a growing need to differentiate between current and past allegations and the manner in which they are handled. Accordingly, the committee proposed that each diocese examine its history in this regard and, based on the risk to the innocent and the vulnerable, consider having a risk track and a non-risk track approach to implementing the procedures.

The complexity of dealing with an incident of sexual abuse is acknowledged by everyone who has had any direct experience with the matter. All the more reason therefore that the whole problem be dealt with from the multidisciplinary perspective. In so approaching the issue, there is a greater prospect that all the individuals and groups involved - victim, family, parish community, diocesan church, the accused, and society at large - will be appropriately cared for and dealt with. Therefore, the Ad Hoc Committee proposed that there be identified in each diocese experts from many disciplines involved in the serious study of issues connected with sexual abuse in order to approach the problem in its legal, psychological, sociological, spiritual, medical, and educational dimensions.

Victims

One section of the Ad Hoc Committee report deals specifically with victims.

Though many of the (diocesan) principles/guidelines quoted above are pastoral in nature, the following references from some policies seem to be in a category by themselves.

In the Scriptures, Benjamin was the youngest of the children of Jacob and Rachel, profoundly vulnerable and even uncertain of his own name and identity (Genesis 35: 16-20). Born into a family troubled by rivalry and jealousy, and exploited by his siblings at times, Benjamin is a symbol for all whose early years are troubled. ...Thus, Benjamin is a symbol for the victim, the perpetrator, and the larger fabric of society which abandons its apathy and comes to an understanding of the evil of abuse, working for a new sense of justice and rehabilitation for all.

We are open and respect your complaint.

We will provide an advisor/advocate, if you so choose.

We will help you obtain counseling support.

We will provide information about support groups.

We will help you obtain spiritual direction.

We will help you bring your concern to the proper church officials outside our diocese.

While we are all in need of redemption and forgiveness for our failings, there is a special harm and injury given to those who are victim-survivors. We use that term because we want to underscore the fact that people are not simply victims as though what happened to them stops there. People are also resilient and however difficult the path to wholeness may be, they are survivors. By using the joint term, we

acknowledge their being wounded. At the same time we mean to urge on their healing and recovery and aim to help it when we can.

Compassion requires that primary attention be given to the person alleged to have been offended.

In principle, nothing about what the pastoral team members say or do should leave room for inference that their purpose is to investigate the validity of the allegation.

Pastoral support is offered to the victim if the parents are consenting and if such is allowed by the appropriate public authority.

No matter their age or experience, minors are not blamed for causing or encouraging the actions of the offender, even if at times the child appears somewhat responsible.

Families often require the same compassion and sensitivity as that of the victims and are not to be forgotten in the healing process.

Several policies encourage the use of a person of support or good counsel - a friend, family member, colleague, or anyone else of the person's choosing - to accompany the one making the complaint.

References are also made to reconciliation between offender and victim-survivor. The general tenor of these remarks is that, while reconciliation remains desirable, the diocese in no sense requires participation as a condition for further involvement in the Church community. Reconciliation is more of a process than an event. Neither the offender nor the victim is to be pressured or rushed to take part in the process of reconciliation.

Only a minority of policies has elaborate guidelines for dealing with the affected parish community. For those that do, the underlying principle is well stated in this reference:

In responding to affected parish communities the diocese is guided by these three principles:

- these parishes undergo a complex process of grieving when they learn a trusted and respected leader has been accused;**

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- a most important element in healing is receiving accurate information of what happened; the healing of the community is a multi disciplinary challenge.

The principles quoted above illustrate the compassion that informs many of the policies. It is important for victims to know early in the process of healing what the diocese can do for them and what it cannot do and why. Providing information to the victim concerning the perpetrator can be an important aspect in the healing process but it is best read on a case by case basis by the professional providing the care.

The NCCB Ad Hoc Committee had several specific proposals concerning victims, namely:

That every policy recognize that primary attention be given to the person alleged to have been offended, to the family, and to the parish community.

That the diocese seek ways to involve the people in general in the whole process of healing the sometimes serious and long-lasting aftereffects of child sexual abuse.

That the diocese promote sessions to affirm and encourage the body of priests whose morale can be adversely affected by the actions of relatively few of their colleagues.

That the policy indicate there is some kind of multi disciplinary body available to provide concrete, direct, and individualized assistance to victims, their families, and the affected parish community.

An important medium for conveying the position of the diocese is the policy itself. The words used in the policies may convey the meaning, but often the very tone of a document can convey a different message. Therefore the Ad Hoc Committee was so mindful of the importance of the tone used in the policy that it made two specific proposals in this regard:

That the tone of the diocesan policy, particularly in its introduction, be clearly pastoral, while appropriately dealing with the legal (civil and canonical) and financial obligations of the diocese.

That any qualifying statements required in a policy be appropriately presented so that the pastoral tone not be diminished.

Education/Prevention

Many victims-survivors worry about the offender's possibility to continue hurting others. This concern in a victim for the prevention of further abuse is often quite striking. The full text of the Ad Hoc Committee report does indeed deal with certain restrictions placed on the accused. However, this overview of how the Committee dealt with victims in its report restricts itself to several relevant quotations from diocesan policies regarding the "Education/ Prevention" dimension that the Committee chose to highlight.

Persons working with minors must always avoid the kind of contact that could cause comment on the part of reasonable people.

The diocese recognizes that in order to more fully address the problem of sexual misconduct by church personnel, it must embark on a comprehensive program of education to create an atmosphere of understanding to help maintain the integrity of the ministerial relationship and prevent the misuse of power and authority.

All who minister to children in the church are to be aware of the causes and signs of child abuse, the steps to take to protect children, and the procedures to follow if abuse is suspected or observed.

Through its diocesan policy the local church is in a position to have some influence on how society at large copes with sexual abuse. The policy has potential to be an instrument for raising awareness, for education, and for prevention. The Ad Hoc Committee therefore proposed that policies make special reference to prevention and education measures in place in the diocese.

Conclusion

The purpose of this overview is to give victims-survivors and those who care for them an idea of how the NCCB Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse dealt with victims-survivors in its report to all of the bishops regarding diocesan policies. Much of the report came from the very words of individual bishops in their own policies. Because rights and responsibilities of people are involved, such policies are very difficult documents to craft. Balancing the pastoral care aspect with what has to be effective technically and legally is a challenge. Readers of this overview will have noted how mindful the Ad Hoc Committee was of this point. In such documents vulnerable persons, such as victims-survivors of sexual abuse, need to hear the receptive tone even more than the actual words. The reader may conclude from this overview that diocesan policies on sexual abuse are taking this point into consideration more and more.

SECTION SEVEN: THE FIVE QUESTIONS

The three victims-survivors who were invited to share their stories (two of which form Section One of this report) were also asked to respond to five questions, which they all generously agreed to do. The questions were:

- What helped on my road to healing?
- What inhibited my healing?
- How did the Church help?
- How did the Church inhibit?
- What should the Church have done?

The third victim-survivor's story is told through the responses to these questions, which forms the first part of this section. Then follows the replies from the authors of the first two stories found in Section One.

Part One: A Third Victim-Survivor's Story

I am the mother of a sexually abused child and the sister of the abuser who is a priest. The perpetrator also sexually molested my nephew, another brother's son. This abuse took place sixteen years ago. I have had knowledge of the abuse for three years. My son and I live in the east, my brother and his son in the south, and my brother, the priest, in the west.

1. What helped on my road to healing?

- My road to healing has been painful, complex and continuous.
- I am nourished by my faith including prayer and the liturgies and am supported by my family and ongoing therapy. My husband and I have been in family systems focused therapy for three years.
- I continue to educate myself about pedophilia, about its effect on the victim and families, about the abuser and about the involvement and response of the Church.
- I became an active participant in the problem solving process and was privileged to become a consultant on a Church committee on sexual abuse.

2. What inhibited my healing?

- Barriers that have stalled the healing process include the geographic distance separating family, the distant locale of the diocese where my brother had been assigned, communication with family and the Church, general attitudes and expectations of all those involved. Our family moves through the healing process separately and differently. My son and I have been involved with separate therapists with different styles of healing.

There has not been the opportunity for me to participate with my son in his therapy although he has joined my husband and me in our therapy over the past year. This has been difficult as my healing has been directly related to my son's well-being.

- My brother in the south is emotionally at a different place which inhibits open and honest communication between us and increases tension.

- There has been a minimal exchange of letters with my brother, the abuser, and little movement toward reconciliation. Our family genuinely cares about my brother and many attempts have been made by them to reach out in a supportive way. Writing has been the only vehicle of communication as he has been unwilling to provide his address, other than a P.O. box, or phone number to family members. His response to family letters has been superficial and sometimes bitter, and that's if he responds at all.

- For me, a major problem has its source in years of religious education, homilies during Mass and much literature that I have read on living the Gospel. There are hang-ups and baggage I've been carrying related to what I've been taught about faith. The theology of forgiveness has been almost glib in its presentation. I have been impressed that forgiveness solves problems when in fact I have learned, through my personal faith, that I have to get beyond the emotion of forgiveness to heal. I cannot allow the feeling "to forgive" to dominate my thought process, and I have to be sensible and focused in the reality of what's presented. I can "will" to forgive and do not wish evil on another and that's the best I can do. Although I have made progress, I'm still dealing with this ambiguity as a result of my religious teachings.

3. How did the Church help?

- Any help that I have received from the Church has been in my seeking and at my invitation. Through the media, I became aware of a certain priest clinician. As a result of my one visit with him and at my request to become involved, he recommended that I get in touch with a bishop who was helping the Church respond creatively to the sexual abuse question. I did, and I was subsequently invited to participate in work with him and his collaborators. This has been an enormous help and a great opportunity to access professionals who are working to develop programs to be implemented within the local Church. The dedication and difficult decision-making I have been privileged to observe has been inspirational.

4. How did the Church inhibit my healing?

- I wrote to the community in the mid-west where my brother was residing to seek educational information and to ask general questions about my brother's problems which were not in violation of his confidentiality. And most important, I requested help in communicating with my brother. The director's response was condescending and of no assistance. Furthermore, the tone of the letter enraged me. Here was a unique situation involving a priest who had abused the children of his brother and sister. What an opportunity this presented for the Church, specifically this community I had written, to deal with the plight of victims and their families without concern for potential law suits.

As you are aware, we are all connected in the healing process. What a loss!

- My brother's bishop, although a kind and compassionate man, was ill informed on the subject of pedophilia. Therefore, his response to the questions I asked were unanswered or inadequate. This was extremely frustrating as I have genuine concerns regarding my brother's prognosis, general well-being and accountability/responsibility to the Church and vice-versa as well as to his victims, and family. My brother's apparent lack of supervision causes concern that he might abuse again. The reluctance of the bishop to inform his priests, the parish and a particular family, having a number of children, with whom my brother was close leads me to believe that the bishop is protecting my brother without appropriate concern for the community.

- I am aware of a person's right to confidentiality regarding the dissemination of information. However, there is a need for the Church to be more open and honest with the victim(s) and their families as they progress through healing. The issue of confidentiality should be reevaluated and explored to its fullest as it pertains to the rights of both the perpetrator and the victims.

5. What should the Church have done?

- Because the abuse in this case was my brother and a priest, I needed and sought solace from the Church.

- The bishop should have been more open and honest about my concerns for my brother and should have become more informed about pedophilia and all its ramifications.

- When possible, particularly if the abuser is a family member, the family of the abuser should be strongly encouraged to participate in treatment with the abuser as their involvement is necessary for forgiveness and family healing.

- The bishop should have been more attentive and demonstrated more concern to the victims and their families by initiating ongoing communication.

- Compensation for incurred therapeutic expenses should have been offered by the Church.

I believe that there is a tremendous need for a national communication network among all the involved dioceses to assist and guide victims and families.

Part Two: One Victim-Survivor Responds to the "Five Questions"

1. What helped on my road of healing?

- Watching on television Anita Hill being questioned by the panel of senators who were **not knowledgeable** on the issues of sexual abuse. I felt they were trying to belittle her and no matter what or how they questioned her she stood firm. Her **courage helped me**. I felt that if she could take all of that in front of thousands of people I could start my journey of healing.

- Many books and articles on the subject of abuse. Also, some of the national programs and local programs on television that addressed this problem of abuse.

- Going to the V.O.C.A.L. conference *Breaking the Silence* that was offered in the area. The name is now changed to LINKUP.

- Sharing my feelings with others who have been victims/survivors.

- Friends who support me. They are like a network of support.

- My therapist -- especially when I was treated by a process called E.M.D.R. (rapid eye movement). I was stuck and these sessions were very powerful and I was able to get in touch with my feelings of abuse.

- This Lent our parish sponsored **Bread, Brother and Bible** evenings. I was one of the speakers on "faith experiences". When I told of my abuse and explained how and where I see Jesus in people and places, I felt like a heavy weight was lifted off of me. Several people came up to me and thanked me; some told me they either had been abused or they knew of someone. Some asked if I could give them some help by naming some books or where they could get a copy of The Healing Woman. Others just hugged me.

- When you are able to help another victim this gives me more strength to go on.

- **Without my husband's support I don't know how I could have healed.** Sometimes he doesn't understand but just gives me a hug. I know he is behind me.

- My daughter and my three sons who are proud of me for standing up to be counted. Each one gives me support in different ways. I know I will never give up.

- My sister who is also a victim/survivor from the same priest. She kept encouraging me to get professional help until, finally, I did. Her phone calls helped me.

2. What inhibited my healing?

- Thinking I could heal myself. Or that it happened many years ago and I kept suppressing it, "It might go away."

- I felt I did something wrong. What would people say or think about me?

- Who would have believed me when I was a teenager? My mother, grandmother, uncle, wouldn't understand. (My father was dead, that's why I didn't list him.)

- The strict Catholic school -- what nun could I tell?

- Years ago no one talk about sex, let alone sexual abuse.

- Now as an adult -- some friends and relatives tell me "It happened so long just don't think about it and it will go away."

- When some men give me a certain look - I feel abuse again or when one tells a joke or makes a sexual remark -- I feel abused again.

- When a person talks about something concerning sexual abuse that they read in the newspaper or saw on television and they make light of it or say ~"She asked for it." I can't understand this and want to correct them no matter where I am.

3. How has the Church helped?

- Pastor listened to me; gave me time - until I was finished.

- Pastor allowed me to cry; held my hand.

- Pastor asked me how he could help. Gave me a card with a therapist who deals with incest and told me he had sent other people there and that they were helped.

- Pastor told me he was sorry.

- Pastor told me if I wanted to talk again he would be there for me at any time.

- Pastor hugged me after asking if it was OK to do so.

- Pastor helped interpret bishop's letter - looked up certain words in the Canon Law book.

- Pastor assisted me in answering "a threat letter".

- Pastor went out of his way to greet me and ask me how I was doing.

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- Pastor listened to my husband and helped him understand where I stood, etc., and how he could be helpful to both of us.

- Pastor was active in having an information evening concerning sexual and physical abuse at our parish. Our parish sponsored the evening and also offered and supported another evening the following year.

- Bishop listened to my story in a pastoral way.

- The Church as a whole needs to recognize that sexual abuse exists and offer help spiritually, financially, and provide loving care to the victim.

- The diocese pays for my professional therapy and also my husband's therapy.

- My friend who happens to be a bishop called me when he found out I was a victim and told me how sorry he was for me and wanted to apologize for his 'fellow priest'.

4. How has the Church prevented healing?

- When a victim reveals her/his abuse and the bishop listens but does not offer any help for the victim. In one case he told the victim the priest was not enjoying good health - had a heart condition. Also was retired, therefore, didn't have much power over him, and does not want to upset him.

- Did not prosecute the predator - allowed the predator to say masses in different parishes - funerals - etc.

- When victim told a friend who happens to be a bishop in another state, the bishop who is representing the priest/predator became angry and threatened to stop paying for the victim's therapy unless the victim apologized.

- "Gag" orders on the victim.

- Ask victim questions like - How depressed are you? Are you a practicing Catholic?

- The bishops (some of them) do not understand how sensitive the victim is. They are not educated on this issue of sexual abuse.

- The Church is listening to and getting advice from lawyers first.

- Too worried about 'scandal' and money.

- Bishops continue to use their power over the victim which is again a form of abuse.

- Keeping the abuse issue a secret, not informing the public who these men are by name so others are not victims.

- Puts either a time frame or limit on moneys for therapy. How does a bishop know?

- Tries to minimize the abuse - "You will outgrow this with the help of God". "I will pray for you". Many victims have a difficult time with that - they have been abused by someone who is/was representing Christ.

(Note: This victim-survivor did not respond to question five.)

Part Three: Another Victim-Survivor Responds to the "Five Questions"

1. What helped on my road to healing?

- The realization that I had the power to heal. That sounds pretty obvious, but it is an extremely hard battle for people who have-grown up thinking of themselves as powerless. For me, the key was the realization that my problems flowed from the decisions I made about myself after the rape. If I had seen the problem as the rape itself, I would have been powerless since I had no way to change what had occurred. That is why playing the blame game is counterproductive; it leaves you with no power whatsoever. So my healing was based heavily on changing the decisions I had made about myself when I was 10 years old - looking at every behavior in which I engaged to judge whether I flowed out of those original decisions.

- Rigorous self-honesty. It isn't any fun to look at your own life with brutal candor and accept responsibility for every stupid, counterproductive or self-destructive thing you've ever done. But that's what it takes. But the key here is self-honesty not self-judgement. Beating myself up what I had done would have only made me feel more helpless.

- Telling. This is taking rigorous self-honesty to the next level. Abuse thrives in an atmosphere of secrecy; so does self-abuse. Truth is an incredibly powerful weapon, personally as well as socially. Telling is terrifying for most survivors: "What will my family think? What will the neighbors say? Everyone will know that I was powerless." But telling is ultimately incredibly liberating. The innocent, after all, don't need secrecy.

- A good therapist. Hand holding and comfort of either the pastoral or secular variety don't change anything, at least for adult survivors. People need practical, no-nonsense therapists who will encourage them to think of themselves as adults with freedom of choice rather than as powerless children. Mediocre therapists are worse than useless.

- Demanding justice. I want to distinguish here between vengeance and justice. Seeking revenge is the act of a child. Seeking justice is the act of an adult. Demanding justice is a clear way of saying: Something awful happened to me that should not have occurred and I have the right to redress.

- Knowing that I was not alone. Since most of us assumed we were alone, and that the abuse was somehow our fault, meeting other survivors is tremendously important because it helps you to fully accept innocence. Clearly, telling is an essential prerequisite to this step.

2. What inhibited my healing?

- Fear of health. If you haven't been through it, you might have a hard time understanding how deep this fear is. The known is always more comfortable than the unknown and for the unhealed, health is the unknown.

- The absence of a roadmap. Because I did my inner work in isolation without knowing that anyone else had been abused - I had no one to guide me or accompany me. This has changed, of course. Today there are therapists expert in the problems of adult survivors of child sexual abuse, self-help books and support groups. They were not when I was struggling out of my pit.

- The lessons I had learned from the Church. Because I was raised in a pre-Vatican II environment, I received a hefty dose of training in what an innately sinful and wicked person I was. After the abuse, things got only worse. That message of sinfulness and the harsh self-judgement which accompanied it - was counterproductive. If you are inherently sinful, then why struggle to be good?

3. How did the Church help my healing?

This question is unclear and the lack of clarity points to a significant problem in the hierarchy's handling of the problem of child sexual abuse. What/who do you mean by "the Church"? I assume you mean the hierarchy, but I think it is dangerous to paint the hierarchy as "the Church." So let me divide my answer.

The hierarchy did nothing to help me and, frankly, I didn't ask for any help. By the time the priest's case went public, I had worked through most of my healing. The Church was irrelevant. And that was good. I feel fortunate that the fight with the Church for information and justice postdated my healing since it might well have distracted me from the work I needed to do.

Individuals were helpful. At the moment that I needed to rid myself of my anger at the priest, it was important for me to know that another priest was there to whom I could go to formally forgive the perpetrator. The priest, fortunately, said absolutely nothing. He kept his mouth shut and listened, which was precisely what I needed him to do. Too many clergy say all the wrong things at critical moments. Let me share a quick example. Two years ago, several of us went to visit one of the nuns who had taught us at our parish school. In the course of our conversation, she told us that the sexual assault thing (because of the numbers it was notorious in the parish) was "all part of God's plan." That's hardly what a survivor needs to hear: that God selected him or her for rape at the age of ten.

4. How did the Church inhibit my healing?

The Church created an environment which guaranteed that I would not tell anyone about my abuse for decades. Priests were held up on tall pedestals. Children were to be seen and not heard. The Church was a perfect institution. I knew, intuitively, that preventing scandal was imperative. That climate was precisely what created the major damage since it was what fostered my sense that the rape was my fault and kept me from telling adults who might have helped disabuse me of that conclusion.

5. What should the Church have done?

- The Church should have taught me about good touching and bad touching and that even people I am taught to respect might do bad things like touching me in the wrong way. This is probably the most important thing Church leaders can do today. If I had been taught those lessons - and I mean taught them as strict lessons - I would have told.

- The Church should have called the police the first time that priest was reported to members of the hierarchy as a potential abuser. The Church should never - ever - have put itself in the role of deciding what action to take with a priest accused of molesting children. That is a criminal matter that was to be left to the police. Failing to do so sent a clear message to people like me that the Church wasn't interested either in the truth or in protecting children.

- The Church should have been my ally in my quest for justice. When I first began looking for that priest, Church officials in that diocese refused to help me. When I hired a private investigator, they wouldn't help him either. When we many victims finally went public, Church officials put up every possible roadblock against our attainment of justice by hiding information and by lying. The Church is supposed to be a force for justice; refusing to offer help freely and openly to survivors seeking justice is a sin.

I want to add one more paragraph, which is a suggestion, really, that you turn the first two questions around and ask: What would help the Church heal itself from this problem? What inhibits the Church in its healing? The answers to both those questions are identical to the answers for individuals. The Church needs religious self-honesty in order to heal - and is inhibited from healing by self-delusion and fear of change. We travel, then, the same path.

CONCLUSION

As indicated in the Introduction to these reflections, AHCSA set out to fulfill an objective arising from its mandate and relating to victims-survivors. The ad hoc committee trusts that the foregoing will make a contribution to this area of pastoral care.

In handing on its work for consideration by AHCSA, the subcommittee helping the bishops - a group of Church professionals working closely with victims-survivors - spontaneously offered some final points for consideration. We recognize that it is an important principle in writing that nothing appear in the conclusion that was not somehow in the body of a report. We think, however, that you will agree that what follows is somehow contained in the reflections above. By way of conclusion therefore here are some final wishes of the subcommittee for victims-survivors' concerns as expressed to the ad hoc committee:

1. That we assure qualified assistance for the victim-survivor.
2. That we not underestimate the faith and understanding of our people.
3. That we be as open as circumstances allow, even to including the victims-survivors as part of the solution.
4. That with sound policies in place we make every effort to convey the message that it is not necessary for a victim to initiate legal proceedings in order to have access to the full response of the Church to the allegation.
5. That while exercising the sound stewardship and prudence required we avoid being unduly affected in decision-making by the fear of being sued.
6. That we reflect on the two questions as turned around by one of the victim-storytellers participating in our report: What would help the Church heal itself from this problem? What inhibits the Church in its healing?
7. Recognizing experience as the great teacher, that we consider what we have learned the last five to ten years: what would we have done differently?