



MEMORANDUM

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FROM: Bishop Hartmayer

TO: Pastors and Parochial Administrators

CC: Members, Diocesan Advisory Board for the Protection of Children and Young People; Superintendent, Catholic Schools Office; Director, Office for the Protection of Children and Young People; Director, Office of Family Life, Director, Office of Faith Formation; Principals

DATE: June 28, 2012

RE: Policies Regarding Amendment to Georgia Code Covering Mandated Reporters

Peace and all good things!

Provisions of Georgia House Bill 1176 are effective July 1, 2012. The new law expands the mandatory reporting requirements to include child service organizations. Specifically, sub-paragraph (b)(5) of section 19-7-5 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated is amended as follows:

“(b) As used in this Code section, the term:

(5) ‘Child service organization personnel’ means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children.”

This new definition extends the mandatory reporting requirements to all employees and all volunteers. This includes parents, coaches, community volunteers, and board members of independent schools.

Pastors and Parochial Administrators will determine the reporting protocol at their parishes, i.e., does the individual making the report present it to their immediate supervisor, to an individual at the parish designated to receive such reports, or to the pastor/parochial administrator himself.

Establishing the local reporting chain should encompass the degree of confidentiality such an action entails, and therefore should be as limited and restricted as possible. If legal advice is sought, prior to any action, the Diocesan Director for the Protection of Children and Young People will facilitate contact with the diocesan attorney.

Beginning with the observation by the initial reporter, a continuous written log of events, actions taken and accompanying times will be maintained at the parish.

Principals of parish/diocesan schools will follow a reporting protocol already established by the Superintendent, Catholic Schools Office. As with parishes, a written log of events will be maintained. If

legal advice is sought, the Superintendent, Catholic Schools Office will facilitate contact with the diocesan attorney.

When a concern exists regarding the intended recipient of the report to respond accordingly, the reporter may instead report directly to the pastor/parochial administrator/principal as appropriate, or (if the concern rests with this individual) directly to the Director, Office for the Protection of Children and Young People/Superintendent, Catholic Schools Office as appropriate.

Making such a report can have a serious impact on the lives of individuals, therefore, pastors/ parochial administrators and principals will ensure that the initial reporter of an event/person is informed of the initial follow-on action, as appropriate, limiting specific information as confidentiality dictates.

Pastors/Parochial Administrators/Principals will be responsible for notifying employees and volunteers that they are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse, to educate them on the requirements of the law, and to explain to them how to report instances of suspected child abuse.

