

The first review board was created on Dec. 5, 1992 by the late Bishop John Marshall. It was called the Misconduct Commission and consisted of nine members (one Religious Sister and eight lay persons) some of whom were by virtue of their secular careers mandated reporters. The start of the commission coincided with the creation of a toll free 800 phone number (800 842-9055) for complaints to be filed. Clear procedures and policies were likewise put forward for the diocesan community. The commission was charged with reviewing all allegations of inappropriate conduct by priests, deacons, religious and lay employees in the diocese

In 2003 with the approval of the Dallas Norms, a set of procedures, prevention services and policies was agreed to by Catholic Bishops from across the United States. The Diocese of Springfield hired a professional social worker to help facilitate compliance with these new standards as well as to act as liaison to persons filing a complaint of misconduct. This Victim Advocate also served as staff to the misconduct commission to help facilitate a timely handling of all complaints and to begin to research and develop prevention awareness programs for young people as well as training for all persons who had any contact with young people under diocesan auspices. The Diocese announced that all priests, deacons, religious, lay employees and volunteers should consider themselves as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and provided training in helping them identify and make such reports to law enforcement officials. Likewise all were subject to CORI background checks every three years. Finally all were required to undergo regular training and sign a code of conduct. Furthermore the advocate collected data documenting complaints of misconduct for public release and facilitated an external review and audit of the diocese's compliance with the Dallas Norms.

At the same time throughout the United States, with approval from the Vatican, new standardized procedures for dealing with priests with credible allegations came into effect. A prompt review of any allegation was required. If the allegation was found to be credible, the priest was removed from all public ministries, ordered not to present himself or act in any manner as a priest and placed on indefinite leave. In the case of a religious order priest, the matter is directed to his religious superior for action. The case against an accused diocesan priest is then forwarded to the Vatican for review. If the matter showed sufficient cause the case was returned to the diocese for either an **administrative procedure**, if the evidence was clear, consistent and overwhelming, or a **canonical trial** if there were some issues of fact that needed clarification.

An **administrative procedure** consists of the bishop asking two impartial priests of good reputation to assist him in reviewing the complaint and all information regarding the matter. The victim and accused may be asked to provide further information so that the merits of the complaint may be appropriately considered. Then the Bishop, with input from the two priests, reaches a finding. If the procedure finds reasonable evidence to support the allegation the bishop requests from the Vatican a penalty, generally either a life of prayer and penance or laicization according to the circumstances of the case. A life of prayer and penance makes the accused priest's removal from all public ministries permanent. A priest under the penalty of prayer and penance may never, for the rest of his life, dress as a priest, hold himself out as a priest, nor may he celebrate Mass or any of the sacraments in public. He may say Mass only in private. Laicization removes the priest from the clerical state entirely and severs all formal ties with the diocese and all other dioceses regarding priestly ministry.

A **canonical trial** involves the convening of a Church court in a neutral diocese, the taking of testimony from all parties involved and the rendering of a finding. Although facilitated through the local diocesan Tribunal Office, all active roles within this judicial process are assumed by qualified Canon lawyers from outside the Diocese of Springfield. If the accused is found to be innocent, the Bishop may return the priest to active ministry. In a judgment of guilt, the court may also impose a penalty of wither prayer and penance or laicization. The court may find there is not enough evidence to prove an allegation but also not enough evidence to prove innocence. In such a case the Bishop can refer the case back to the Vatican.

The diocese has a liaison to those priests with credible allegations but not laicized, to provide reasonable assurance that they are abiding by the restrictions put forth.

In 2004, in further compliance with the Dallas Norms the Misconduct Commission was re-constituted to become the Review Board and to include one past victim and one priest of impeccable reputation.

The following is a listing of all living diocesan priests/former diocesan priests who have had a credible allegation made against them while they were still living.

Albert Blanchard – Had already been voluntarily laicized when Misconduct Commission found allegation to be credible.

Fr. Michael Devlin – Canonical Trial ordered – in process

Fr. David Farland – Administrative process found in support of the allegation  
– life of prayer and penance

Fr. Clarence Forand (deceased) – Had been placed under “prayer & penance” conditions

Alfred Graves – laicized

Edward Kennedy – laicized

Fr. John Koonz - Administrative process - outcome pending Vatican approval

Fr. Francis Lavelle – Administrative process - outcome pending Vatican approval

Richard Lavigne - laicized

Deacon James Martone – Faculties to function as a deacon removed

Richard Meehan – laicized

John R. Russell – Allegation from 1969 only reported after he joined Episcopal Church – they were subsequently notified.

Fr. Charles Joseph Sgueglia (deceased) - Had been placed under “prayer & penance” conditions

Fr. Charles Sullivan - Administrative process found in support of the allegation

– life of prayer and penance

Fr. Ronald Wamsher – Canonical Trial ordered – in process

In addition, with regard to the matter of former Springfield Bishop Thomas L. Dupre, Church law dictates very specifically that any actions regarding allegations of misconduct brought against a bishop can only be handled by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.

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