News



The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops building is seen in Washington May 8, 2017. The USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection released its 2024 annual report on findings and recommendations on implementation of the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" on June 6, 2025. (OSV News/Tyler Orsburn)

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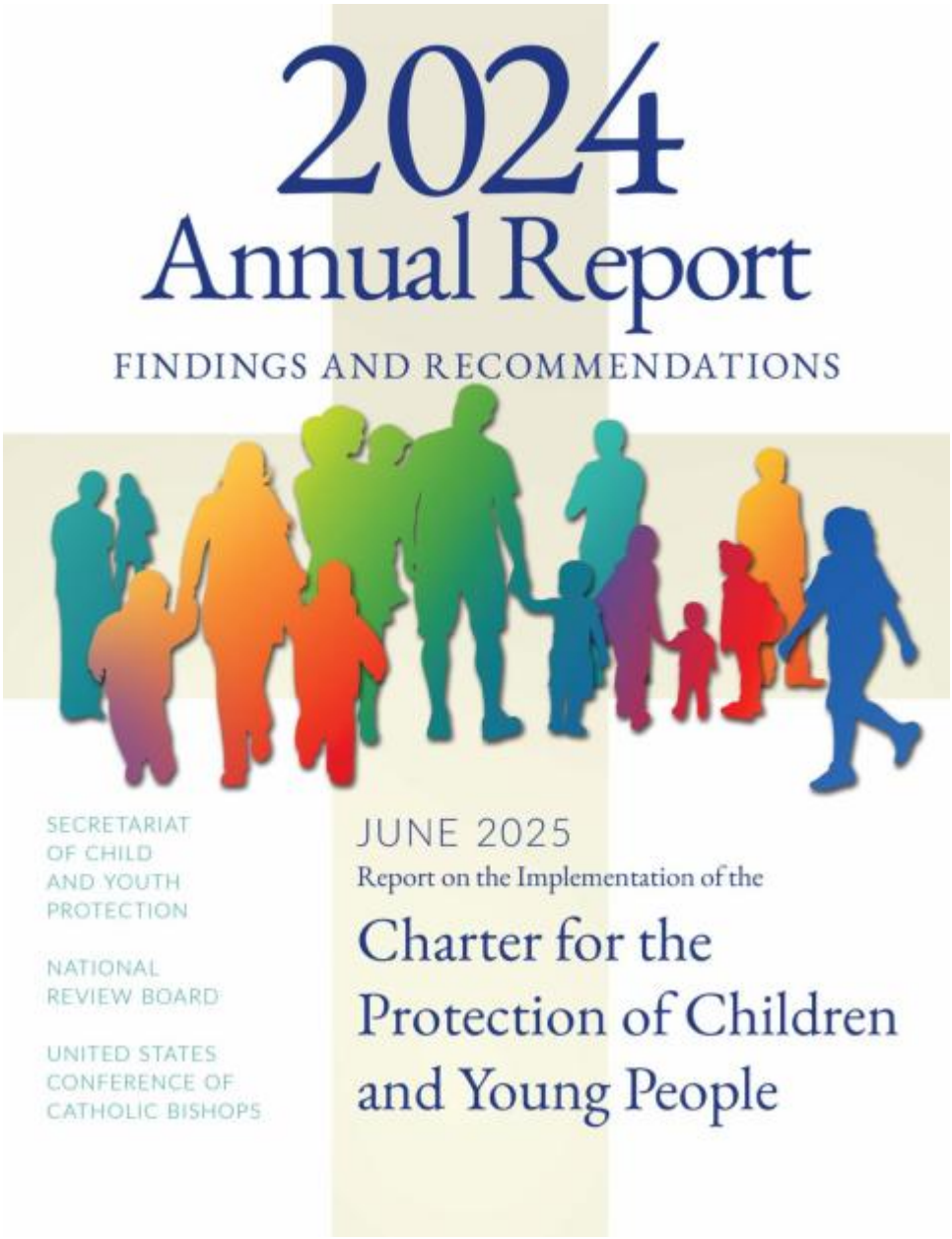
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The U.S. Catholic bishops' latest annual report on child and youth protection shows abuse allegations continue to decline — but authors warned of the dangers of complacency among dioceses and the laity in upholding key aspects of bishops' safe environment protocols.

In particular, said the report, lack of functioning diocesan review boards to review protocols and allegations, along with an increase in parents opting their children out of safe environment training, could erode progress in addressing and preventing abuse.

On June 6, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection released the "2024 Annual Report — Findings and Recommendations on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

The 2024 report is the 22nd since the charter was established by the U.S. Catholic bishops in 2002 as a number of clerical abuse scandals emerged. Commonly called the Dallas Charter, the document lays out a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, and includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of abuse.



This is the cover of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection's 2024 annual report on the "Findings and Recommendations on the Implementation of the 'Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People'" released June 6, 2025. (OSV News/courtesy USCCB)

Data for the report came from audits conducted by StoneBridge Business Partners, a Rochester, New York-based consulting firm that provides forensic and compliance services to a range of organizations. In addition, the report includes a 2024 survey by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate on allegations and costs related to the abuse of minors.

Almost all of the nation's 196 dioceses and eparchies participated in the annual audit, with no information available for the Diocese of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, was unable to provide much data to CARA due to a court agreement regarding its bankruptcy filing.

StoneBridge identified four findings of noncompliance for the report period. The Diocese of Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Church in the USA lacked a safe environment training program for minors, while also failing to conduct background checks and provide safe environment training for most of its volunteers.

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania, did not have a functioning review board at the time of the audit.

OSV News is awaiting clarification from both dioceses on the status of the noncompliances.

For the period July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, the report counted 902 allegations reported by 855 victim-survivors of childhood sexual abuse by clergy, a decrease of 406 (31%) from last year. Over half (61%) were brought to the attention of dioceses and eparchies by an attorney.

Diocese and eparchies provided assistance to 146 victim-survivors and their families over the past year, while continuing to support 1,434 who had reported abuse in previous audit periods.

The CARA survey included in the report showed that during the audit period, 122 allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by a diocesan or eparchial priest or deacon were deemed credible. That total represented 121 individuals with complaints against 97 priests or deacons. Most of the allegations were made by adults regarding abuse they reported experiencing as minors; eight of the allegations involved children under the age of 18 since 2005.

CARA said 99% of the nation's dioceses and eparchies participated in the survey, while 64% of the religious communities for which CARA had contact information responded.

As it has since 2004, CARA also tallied the costs of abuse settlements ($242,799,401) and prevention efforts ($32,864,402), which made for a combined total of $275,663,803 — a 7% decrease from last year's $295,466,752.

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OSV News previously found that as of late 2024, the total payouts of U.S. Catholic dioceses for abuse claims since 2004 had exceeded $5 billion.

Safe environment protocols remained robust in the 2024 reporting period, with some 2.24 million background checks on clergy, employees and volunteers over the past year, along with training for over 2.2 million adults and 2.8 million children and youth on detection and reporting of abuse.

However, the report highlighted areas where protocols have become lax in greater than 10% of the nation's dioceses and eparchies.

As in last year's report, the issue of diocesan review boards — confidential consultative bodies to assist bishops that are required by the Dallas Charter — remained a pain point, with StoneBridge observing "some dysfunction" that included "lack of meetings, inadequate composition or membership, not following the by-laws of the Board, members not confident in their duties, lack of rotation of members, and a lack of review of diocesan/eparchial policies and procedures."

In addition, promulgation letters from bishops, by which safe environment programs are officially established in a diocese or eparchy, were sometimes found to be outdated, insufficient or nonexistent.

In other cases, dioceses and eparchies "were not effectively monitoring compliance with policy requirements for training or background checks for clergy and other persons with contact with minors," said the report.

Among the specific deficiencies were "a lack of annual certifications from parishes/schools, poor database management, and a lack of visitation to parishes/schools either remotely or in-person to verify proper implementation of the safe environment programs."

The audit also showed that personnel turnover in dioceses and eparchies has emerged as "a key factor and challenge" in implementing the Dallas Charter, wrote James Bogner, chairman of the USCCB's National Review Board, a lay-led group that advises the bishops on preventing sexual abuse of minors.

Some of those difficulties are being addressed through improved employee succession planning and onboarding, said Bogner in his summary of the audit findings, presented in the report via a Feb. 19 letter to USCCB president Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services.

Bogner said the USCCB secretariat's Child Abuse Prevention Empowerment program, known as CAPE, a three-level online educational program, can help address the gap.

But dioceses and eparchies alone aren't to blame for certain lapses in vigilance, noted Bogner, who described a "concerning trend over the past two years" of more parents opting their kids out of safe environment training.

"This is indicative of complacency," which "can be dangerous and open the door for bad actors to harm children," warned Bogner.

"Despite our progress, the evil of abuse continues to exist. It is a relentless adversary that demands our ongoing vigilance and initiative-taking measures," wrote Archbishop Broglio in his preface to the 2024 report. "The creation of robust policies, ethical/best practices, and respectful and appropriate behaviors are but some of the tools in our fight against this scourge."

The archbishop also pointed to "a significant cultural shift taking place within the Church … characterized by an increased emphasis on transparency, accountability, and victim-survivor support.

"We are instilling improvements, learning from our mistakes, in how we address and prevent abuse, and making sure that the voices of the victim-survivors are heard, respected, and acted upon," he wrote.