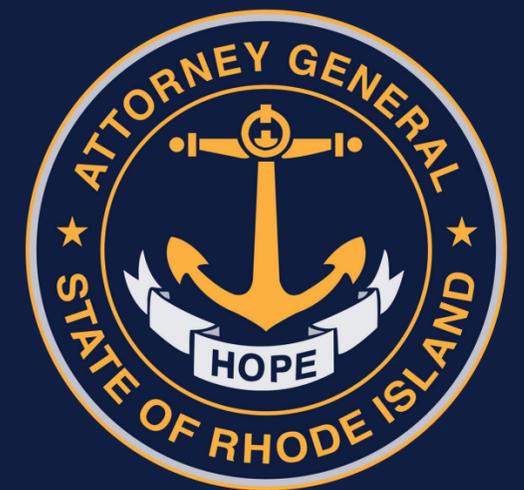


REPORT ON CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN THE DIOCESE OF PROVIDENCE

Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General

March 4, 2026



Know, Bishop Gelineau, how difficult this is for me. It is time now for healing and to try to go on with my life instead of hiding from the events of the past. I have prayed over these events and feel that definitely some consideration should be given me. My life has been affected tremendously (hopefully, not beyond repair). Because of my love for the church, my suffering today is multiplied by an unfounded sense by guilt. I have been unfair to myself most of my life, blaming myself for the bad things that have happened to me or to those I love. It is important for me to be fair to myself now. If someone other than a priest had emotionally and sexually violated me the way Fr. D did, I would not be concerned or fearful of being greedy or feel guilty about asking for retribution. I want you to look at this as if someone had violated one of your nieces years ago and that her life and that of her children has been negatively effected. I can't begin to tell you the number of types of ways I have been effected on nearly a daily basis. You cannot imagine the ways events of my life have been overshadowed by this abuse. There has not been a Mass I have participated in, including my marriage, the baptisms of my children and my mother's funeral Mass, where I have not brought these events to the Lord and asked Him to heal me.

The issues you raise with regard to serious ones. You may be sure that I take them that way that the special difficulties we have had in the Diocese receive. I certainly want to avoid the possibility of a lawsuit and the possibility that Fr. Desrosiers would not be able to return to ministry. She emphasizes that their program is not therapeutic. It is geared to giving people a time away from ministry, but preparing them to return to ministry with renewed vigor. She feels very unfair that we sent Fr. Desrosiers to the program as he did. It is most probably not the type of program he needs and he feels. They want to be of help, as they tried to do with you Carpentier, but they cannot upset the others in the program taking on candidates who should most likely be in another of program.

You mention the ultimate conviction now that by his I remember an episode when I was with the Wizard of Oz in the conference room and I really hide. Sister was saying. I could hear their footsteps and I started to hide in the chair under the table and literally pulled me out and brought me to his room and oh, and also after you know I was the candy, but when we, when I came to take the candy and call me filthy, dirty liars.

I went on a camping trip with other Boy Scouts and Fr. Kelley, an adult on the camping trip. The trip was to experience what it was like an authentic Indian. Fr. Kelley was around with only a tiny loin cloth and I could see his genitals. During the trip he would sleep with me naked in my "lean-to." He would fondle me repeatedly trying to sexually arouse me. I was so nervous to get sexually aroused. I didn't want the other kids to know so I resisted Father Kelley and kept telling him that this was the wrong place and time to do this. I got very little sleep that night. When I woke up he was lying on top of me naked.

You will understand by this appointment that it is no vindication of your erratic and intolerable conduct manifested in the past. I am interested in safeguarding your priesthood and in saving your immortal soul. Try now to cooperate with God's grace and enter this new field of priestly work with zeal and genuine devotedness and with a sense of true fellowship for your priestly associates. If I receive any more complaints about your conduct I shall be forced to remove you from the roll of those available for priestly service in the diocese.

He said it would make him be a better priest and it would allow him to better serve his parish.

Uhm, some of his abuse was also physiological where he said that he did these things to help me grow and that I needed purification and I didn't know what purification meant at the time either but I remember him saying that word.

DEANERY MEETINGS -- MARCH 1985
Talk delivered by Bishop Kenneth A. Angell
(Excerpt)

Thank you for your attention and participation. We are in this together. I would ask your prayers for Henry Leech and Bill O'Connell. Pray for them, for the alleged victims and their families. Pray for our Church of Providence.

One final note -- if you personally are in any trouble, whether it be pedophilia or any deviant behavior, please come in and talk to me. In God's name, I ask you to do so. I think you know me -- I will keep your confidence. I promise you that. I will tell no one without your approval. I know this is difficult but, just maybe, I can help or get help for you. I have already spoken to Bishop Gelineau about this. See him if your prefer -- he, also, will keep your confidence. A major part of our ministry is to minister to the ministers. But I am not naive either. I know you will have some hesitation in talking to us. But, at least go to a fellow priest -- get help. There is no point of leading a double life. It is wrong and you know it. But, more importantly, you need help. Please seek out that help.

I think it's important, I think that it's important to emphasize that before that first time where, in October of 1981, where he sexually abused me by taking off my clothing in his bed and touching me and fondling my, my penis, before that, in the years leading up to that, probably more so in my, I would say more so in my junior high years, when I was in, say, seventh and eighth grade into ninth grade, leading up to that he was someone who was very charismatic and I was certainly, as a young boy, he was someone I looked up to. He was my priest, he was very outgoing, very friendly, he, he paid a lot of attention to young people, but in particular to me, you know, for an adult, he paid a lot of extra attention to me, probably what would be referred to I'm sure as kind of a little too much.

Grooming.

Grooming, yes, and during those years before he eventually sexually assaulted me, he showed me a lot of affection, a lot of physical affection through hugs and a comment that he often made to me and sometimes, and it was, for the most part, I don't recall it ever being in front of anybody, I think it was always when we were alone, a lot of times we would be in the Sacristy, uhm, if I was there to serve mass and we were

very disturbed that we did not indicate to her that Fr. Desrosiers. She learned just recently that there was a possibility of a lawsuit and the possibility that Fr. Desrosiers would not be able to return to ministry. She emphasizes that their program is not therapeutic. It is geared to giving people a time away from ministry, but preparing them to return to ministry with renewed vigor. She feels very unfair that we sent Fr. Desrosiers to the program as he did. It is most probably not the type of program he needs and he feels. They want to be of help, as they tried to do with you Carpentier, but they cannot upset the others in the program taking on candidates who should most likely be in another of program.

You are hereby assigned as Chaplain to Stella Maris Home for Convalescents, Newport, Rhode Island.

You will take up residence there before Thursday, April 5th. You will understand that this assignment is prompted by my desire to keep you in the priestly ministry with the hope that, being chastened, your priestly zeal may be renewed.

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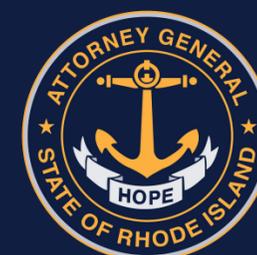
Forward: A Letter from Attorney General Peter F. Neronha

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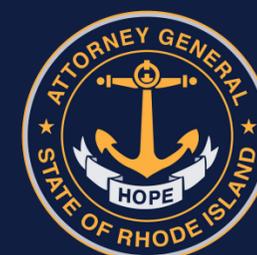
The Diocese of Providence's Historical Approaches to Child Sexual Abuse: 1950-2000

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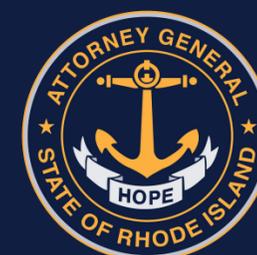
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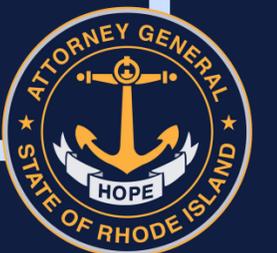
Chapter I

Forward: A Letter from Attorney General

Peter F. Neronha _____

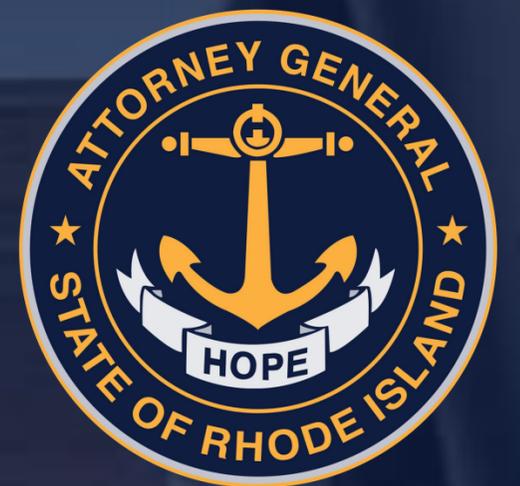
“

“Generations of Rhode Island victims, their families, and others who have suffered the impacts of this trauma **deserve to know the truth of what occurred.**”



Chapter II

Executive Summary



Clergy Reports Across the Country

After a Pennsylvania grand jury released a report on the clergy abuse crisis in 2018, Attorneys General from multiple states launched their own investigations and have released their own findings.



Pennsylvania

2018



Nebraska

2021



Illinois

2023



Maryland

2023



Michigan

2025



Rhode Island

2026

Clergy Reports Across the Country

- States have conducted their investigations and released their findings in different ways
 - Pennsylvania used the state's grand jury reporting statute, under which the findings would be public
- In Rhode Island, grand jury investigations and findings are **secret** absent a criminal indictment



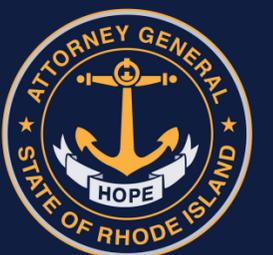
Executive Summary

- ➔ From 1950 to 2022, the Diocese of Providence employed **75 credibly accused priests** who reportedly **abused over 300 children**
- ➔ Generations of Rhode Islanders suffered immeasurable, **irreparable harm**
- ➔ Historically, bishops and other senior Diocesan leaders **concealed** clergy child sexual abuse, exacerbating the crisis and leading to more abuse



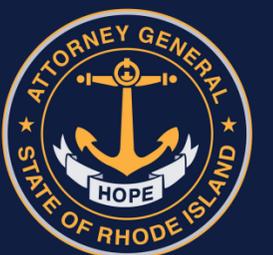
Executive Summary

- ➔ **Historically**, the Diocese **failed to consistently refer to law enforcement complaints** of child sexual abuse by clergy
- ➔ While the situation has significantly improved, and the Diocese has made meaningful strides, **more work is needed**
- ➔ The Attorney General proposes reforms to the Diocese and the General Assembly to advance **transparency, accountability, and public safety**



Investigation had four main goals:

- 1** provide an account of clergy sexual abuse of children;
- 2** describe the Diocese of Providence's response to clergy sexual abuse of children;
- 3** identify perpetrators who could still be prosecuted and charge them by criminal indictment; and
- 4** propose reforms and accountability measures that will help prevent these crimes from recurring.



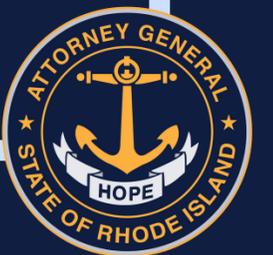
Reconstructing History

- Over **250,000** pages of Diocesan records reviewed
- Nearly **150** confidential contacts with survivors
- **4** new criminal cases charged against clergy abusers

“

“Those children, as well as the rest of the community... have been victimized, too, **by a system that refused to acknowledge the possibility of wrongdoing.**”

A parishioner writing to Bishop Gelineau in February 1985

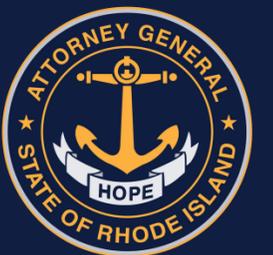


Reconstructing History

- ➔ The **first comprehensive review** of the clergy abuse crisis in the Diocese of Providence
- ➔ **This Report addresses the past, present, and future:** it covers historical approaches through current concerns, and proposes reforms to the Diocese and lawmakers
- ➔ **The true scope of abuse is likely even greater** than reported here, and the Report may be updated

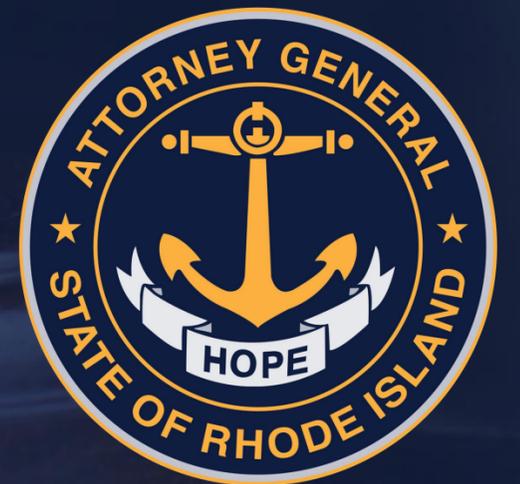


While this is history, it is
nevertheless a **living** history



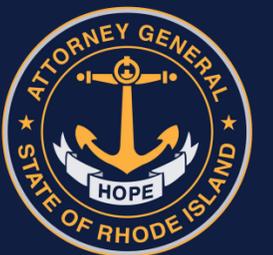
Chapter III

Legal Framework and Analysis



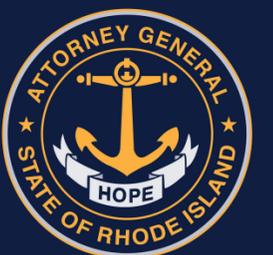
Legal Framework

- ➔ This Investigation sought to **identify cases where criminal prosecution may still be viable**
- ➔ Our assessment of potential charges necessarily considered both **modern and historical criminal laws**, and their applicable **statutes of limitations**
- ➔ Historical abuse is often **not chargeable** due to narrower criminal laws and shorter statutes of limitations in effect at the time.



Available Criminal Laws

- ➔ **Prior to 1979**, Rhode Island sexual assault and child molestation statutes did not exist
- ➔ Abuse occurring before May 1979 can only be prosecuted if it meets the **common law definition of rape**: “the nonconsensual act of sexual intercourse committed by a man with a woman who is not his wife.”
 - Excludes **male victims**
 - Excludes **non-penetrative conduct**
 - Requires **proof of lack of consent** (e.g. force or coercion)



Statutes of Limitations

Statutes of limitations present the **greatest legal obstacle** to prosecution of child sexual abuse

➔ For children **under 14**:

Conduct involving **sexual penetration** can generally be prosecuted if it occurred since June 1988, OR since May 1979 if under 13 years old OR proof of additional element such as force or coercion

Conduct involving **sexual contact** can generally be prosecuted if it occurred since June 1988, OR since June 1982 if under 13 years old



Statutes of Limitations

Statutes of limitations present the **greatest legal obstacle** to prosecution of child sexual abuse

➔ For children **14 or older**:

Can prosecute conduct involving **sexual penetration** that took place after May 1979, but must prove additional elements (e.g., force or coercion)

Can only prosecute conduct involving **sexual contact** within a 3-year statute of limitations



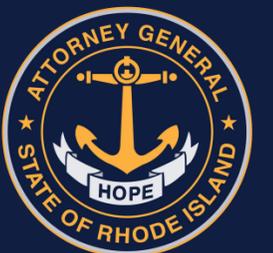
Modern Criminal Framework: Post-1979

Crimes Involving **Sexual Penetration**

➔ **Definition:** Penile-vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse, “or any other intrusion, however slight, by any part of a person’s body or by any object into the genital or anal openings of another person’s body, or the victim’s own body upon the accused’s instruction, but emission of semen is not required.”

➔ **No Statute of Limitations**

- **First-Degree Sexual Assault** - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-37-2
 - Penetration of a child under 13 (May 1979 until May 1984)
 - Penetration of any person, plus (May 1979 to present):
 - Victim mentally or physically helpless, OR defendant uses “force or coercion,” “concealment” or “surprise,” or a façade of medical treatment.



Modern Criminal Framework: Post-1979

Crimes Involving **Sexual Penetration**

➔ No Statute of Limitations

- **First-Degree Child Molestation** - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-37-8.1
 - Penetration of a child under 13 (May 1984 to present)
 - Penetration of a child under 14 (June 1988 to present)
 - Includes 13-year-old victims



Modern Criminal Framework: Post-1979

Crimes Involving **Sexual Contact**

- ➔ **Definition:** The intentional touching of the victim's or accused's intimate parts, clothed or unclothed, intended by the accused to be for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification, or assault
- ➔ **Second-Degree Sexual Assault (R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-37-4)**
 - **No Statute of Limitations:** Sexual contact with child under 13 (June 1982 to May 1984)
 - **Three-Year Statute of Limitations:** Sexual contact with a person 14 or older (or 13 or older pre-1988) where:
 - victim is mentally incapacitated, mentally disabled, or physically helpless;
 - defendant uses force or coercion;
 - defendant overcomes the victim through concealment or surprise; or
 - medical treatment or examination of the victim for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification, or stimulation



Modern Criminal Framework: Post-1979

Crimes Involving **Sexual Contact**

→ Second-Degree Child Molestation (R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-37-8.3)

- **No Statute of Limitations**

- Sexual contact with a child under 13 (May 1984 to present)
- Sexual contact with a child under 14 (June 1988 to present)
 - Includes 13-year-old victims.



Modern Criminal Framework: Post-1979



Third-Degree Sexual Assault (R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-37-6)

- **Three-Year Statute of Limitations**

- Accused is over 18 and engages in sexual penetration with a person who is 14-15 years old (statutory rape)
- Accused is over the age of 18 and engages in sexual penetration or sexual contact with a victim who is 14-17 years old under circumstances where the accused holds a position of authority, or has supervisory or disciplinary power over the victim
 - Enacted in 2022, with this Office's support; no retroactivity
- **Force or coercion not an element of this offense**



Modern Criminal Framework: Post-1979

Additional Crimes Against Children

The statute of limitations for each of these offenses is three years:

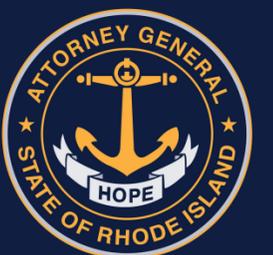
- ➔ Contributing to Delinquency - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-9-4 (Enacted 1908)
- ➔ Indecent Solicitation of a Child - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-37-8.8 (Enacted 2004)
- ➔ Child Endangerment - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-9-5.4 (Enacted 2022)



Potential Charges **Against Diocese Itself**

➔ Laws Used to Prosecute **Accomplices, Supervisors, & Organizations**

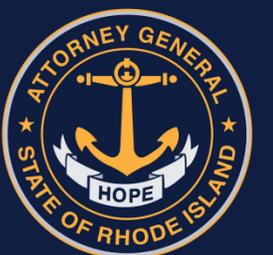
- **Aiding & Abetting** – R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-1-3 (Enacted 1896)
 - Targets those who “aid, assist, abet, counsel, hire, command, or procure another to commit any crime or offense”
 - Requires proof that accomplice (1) actively participated in the crime, AND (2) **shared criminal intent** of person(s) who actually carried it out.
 - Presence at scene, or knowledge that crime being committed, insufficient.
- **Same limitations period and punishment as underlying offense(s)**



Potential Charges **Against Diocese Itself**

➔ Laws Used to Prosecute **Accomplices, Supervisors, & Organizations**

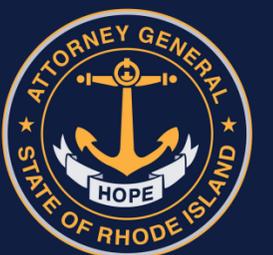
- **Conspiracy** - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-1-6 (Enacted 1975)
 - Criminalizes the “**agreement by two or more persons to commit an unlawful act or to perform a lawful act for an unlawful purpose.**”
 - Co-conspirators may also be charged with crimes committed in furtherance of the conspiracy.
- **Same limitations period and punishment as underlying offense(s).**



Potential Charges **Against Diocese Itself**

➔ Laws Used to Prosecute **Accomplices, Supervisors, & Organizations**

- **Duty to Report** – R.I. Gen. Laws § 40-11-3 (Enacted 1976)
 - Failure to report known or suspected child abuse a misdemeanor
 - Subject to three-year statute of limitations.

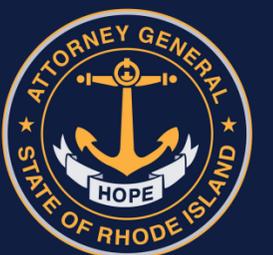


Potential Charges **Against Diocese Itself**



Laws Used to Prosecute **Accomplices, Supervisors, & Organizations**

- **Harboring Criminals** - R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-1-4 (Enacted 1844)
 - Felony to knowingly harbor person who has committed any crime “with the intent that [such person] shall escape or avoid detection, arrest, trial, or punishment.”
 - Requires proof that defendant knew person committed crime, was subject to arrest by warrant or probable cause, and intent to shield.
 - Subject to three-year statute of limitations.



Potential Charges **Against Diocese Itself**

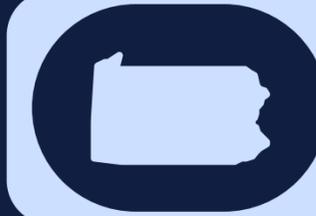
➔ Laws Used to Prosecute **Accomplices, Supervisors, & Organizations**

- **Additional Offenses Considered:** Intimidation of witnesses and victims
(§ 11-1-4); Compounding or concealing a felony (§ 11-1-5);
Obstruction
(§ 11-32-32); Racketeering (RICO) (§ 7-5-1 et seq)



Institutional Accountability

- Attorneys General across the country have published reports about clergy abuse and have brought charges against individual priests
- **No Attorney General has prosecuted a diocese for crimes arising from clergy abuse scandal**



Pennsylvania

2018



Nebraska

2021



Illinois

2023



Maryland

2023



Michigan

2025

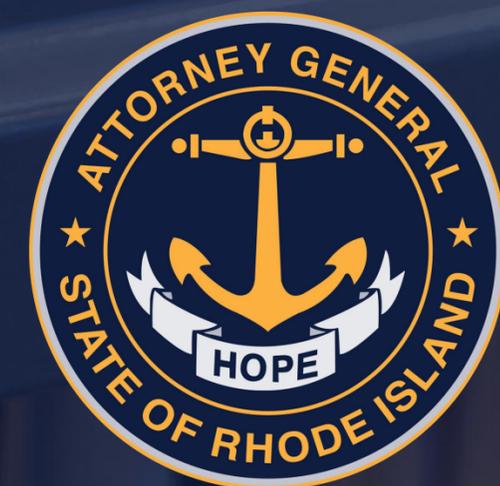


Rhode Island

2026

Chapter IV

An Overview of Investigative Findings



A Fork in the Road: Grand Jury?



Option 1: Grand Jury Investigation

- Compel the production of documents and testimony
- Only indictments would become public
- Investigation results would be confidential and would not provide a full accounting to the public



Option 2: Attorney General Investigation

- Using the resources of the Office to conduct an investigation and produce a report



Advantages of the Grand Jury

- Compulsory Process – subpoena of witnesses and documents
- Failure to produce documents may result in criminal sanctions
- Testimony under pains and penalties of perjury
- Immunization of witnesses to compel testimony
- With AG Grand Jury Report Statute – public disclosure of findings



Disadvantage of the Grand Jury

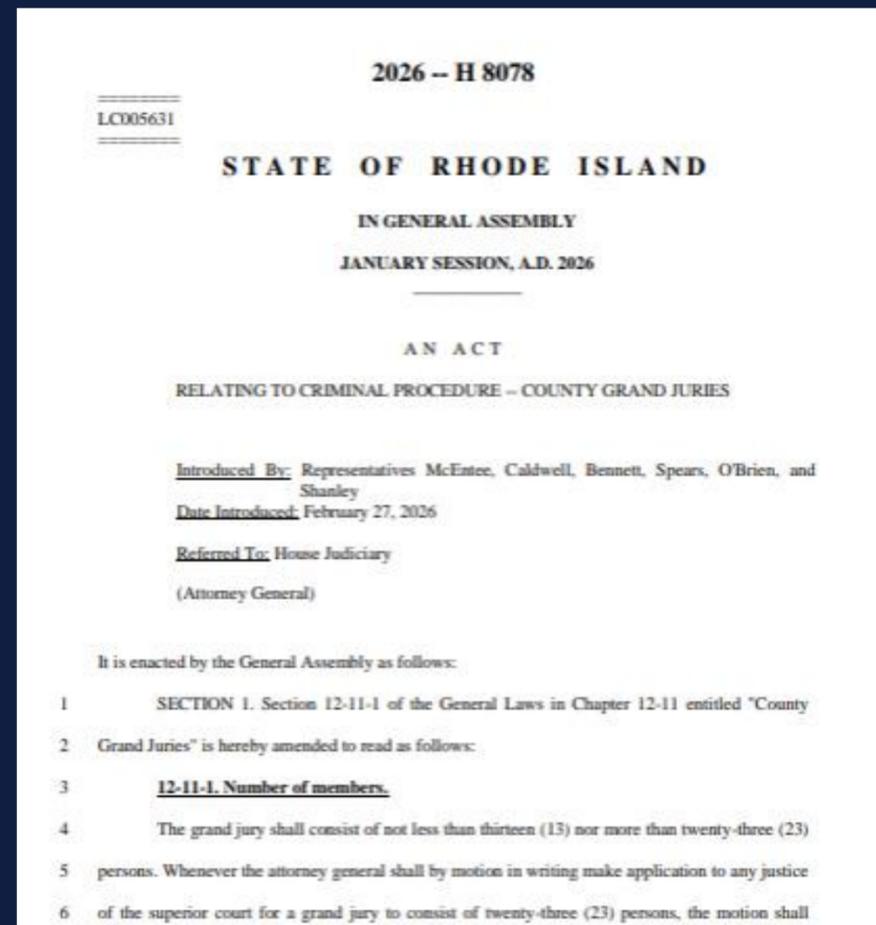
SECRECY



Disadvantage of the Grand Jury

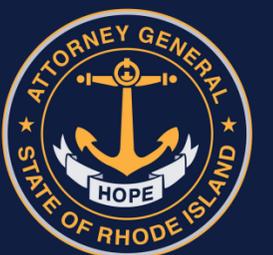


Could be resolved with the passage of state legislation allowing for **grand jury reporting**, a version of which has been introduced in the **last several legislative sessions**



House Bill: H 8078

Senate Bill: pending introduction



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into the 22nd day of July, 2019 by and between The Honorable Peter F. Neronha, in his official capacity as Attorney General for the State of Rhode Island and His Excellency, the Most Reverend, Thomas J. Tobin, Bishop of Providence (collectively, the "Parties").

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the Attorney General is committed to conducting a full and thorough review of past allegations of clergy child sexual abuse within the Diocese of Providence; and

WHEREAS, the Bishop's policy regarding cooperation with law enforcement is furthered by a voluntary records review; and

WHEREAS, this MOU expands on and supplements the Letter of Understanding (LOU) by and between the Parties dated August 30, 2016 attached hereto as Exhibit A by providing access to historical records; and

WHEREAS, the Attorney General seeks a review of Diocesan files and records to (1) identify any prosecutable cases; (2) ensure there are no credibly accused clergy in active ministry; and (3) provide input into improvements of the Diocese's current policies and procedures for preventing and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse and the Diocese's cooperation with law enforcement, and the Diocese seeks to cooperate in that review;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Parties agree as follows:

AGREEMENT

I. Definitions

A. "Files" shall mean any and all materials, documents, files, records, forms, notes, memos, summaries, correspondence, statements, and data, as identified in Section II.D, whether in paper, digital or electronic form, related in whole or in part to allegations of Sexual Misconduct Perpetrated Against a Child by Diocesan Personnel during the Review Period including, but not limited to, the clergy files, personnel or employment files, files maintained and held pursuant to Canons 486 (General Archives), 487 (General Archives), 489 (Secret Archives), and 491 (Historical Archives) of the Code of Canon Law, and investigative files maintained by the Diocesan Office of Compliance ("OEC").

B. "Review Period" shall mean the period of time from January 1, 1950 to the present.

C. "Sexual Misconduct Perpetrated Against a Child by Diocesan Personnel" shall mean: any allegation or complaint, whether determined to be founded or unfounded, credible or not credible, whether previously disclosed to law enforcement or not, involving conduct against a person under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged incident, (1) which, if proven, would now constitute a criminal violation defined by Rhode Island law as: (i) First or Second Degree Child Molestation, First, Second or Third Degree Sexual Assault, and Indecent Solicitation of a Child under R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 37 of Title 11; (ii) Felony Assault, Simple Assault, or Assault with the Intent to Commit Sexual Assault under R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 5 of Title 11; (iii) Exploitation

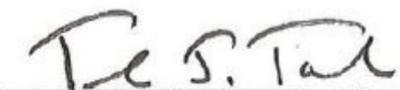
Option 2: Attorney General Investigation

Memorandum of Understanding

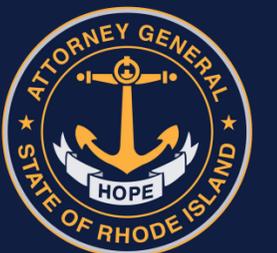
July 22, 2019



The Honorable Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General

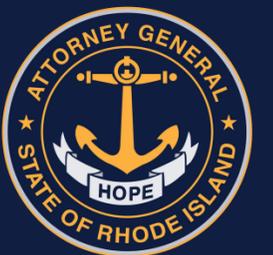


The Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, D.D.
Bishop of Providence



Investigative Challenges

- This Report is necessarily limited in large part to **documents** the Diocese voluntarily produced
- The Diocese withheld documents over which they **asserted privilege**
- The Diocese **refused** to make any Diocesan personnel available for in-person **interviews**
- The Diocese did not document all complaints, and some records were likely previously destroyed



Investigative Challenges



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

150 South Main Street • Providence, RI 02903
(401) 274-4400 • www.riag.ri.gov

Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General

July 22, 2024

Via Email

Mr. Howard Merten
Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP
40 Westminister Street, Suite 1100
Providence, RI 02903
hmerten@psh.com

RE: April 26, 2024, Request for further materials and information

Dear Howard:

I am writing in connection with this Office's April 26, 2024, request for further materials and information pursuant to Section II.F of the July 2019 Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU").

It has been nearly three months since that request, and the Diocese's response remains largely incomplete. To date, the Diocese has responded to two of the 32 requests contained in our April 26 letter. While we do appreciate the Diocese's June 20 production concerning those two items, it remains unclear to us—despite our various communications with your firm—when, and to what extent, the Diocese intends to respond to the remaining 30 requests. Given that three months was the time period within which the Diocese and this Office had mutually agreed that the "core" files for this review would be produced, see MOU, Section II.G ("It is expected that production of the Files outlined in paragraphs II.D. 1-5 will conclude within no later than three months of the date of the execution of this MOU."), it should not require that same amount of time for the Diocese to respond to discrete, supplemental requests such as the instant one.

As noted in our April 26 letter, the details we seek relate to significant aspects of this Office's investigation. Yet we are equally mindful of the significant, and growing, public interest in the completion of our investigation and the issuance of a report. In keeping with the Diocese's own commitments in the MOU, and elsewhere, to cooperating with

Mr. Howard Merten
Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP
July 22, 2024
Page 2

law enforcement in these matters, I encourage your client to provide a complete response to the April 26 request as soon as possible, but no later than the end of this month. At that point, this Office will consider the Diocese's response complete, and we will incorporate both the information that the Diocese provided, and, as the case may be, did not provide, into our concluding efforts.

Respectfully,

Adi Goldstein
Deputy Attorney General

Cc: Sean P. Malloy, Esq.
Andrea Mauro, Esq.
Eugene G. Bernardo II, Esq.
Christopher M. Wildenhain, Esq.

Delays in Production

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Bishops & Tenures

Most Rev. Russell J. McVinney: 1948-1971

Most Rev. Louis E. Gelineau: 1972-1997

Most Rev. Robert Mulvee: 1997-2005

Most Rev. Thomas J. Tobin: 2005-2023

Most Rev. Richard G. Henning: 2023-2024

Most Rev. Bruce A. Lewandowski: 2025-present

3000

**or more complainants
reported abused by
clergy in the Diocese
from 1950 to the present**

5:1

**ratio of male to
female victims**

4

**current and
former priests
criminally
charged**

26

**years, the
average time
it took for
survivors to
report abuse**

1970s

**the decade with
the highest number
of victims recorded**

75

**total clergy
identified by our
investigation
as credibly
accused**

11-14 years old

**the most prevalent age range when
the reported abuse began**

36

**Rhode Island cities
and towns assigned
accused clergy**

Former R.I. priest charged with sexual assaults going back to 1989

James Silva, 81, is charged with two counts of first-degree child molestation sexual assault and nine counts of second-degree child molestation sexual assault for decades-old offenses.

By Brian Amaral Globe Staff, Updated November 9, 2021, 10:06 a.m.



RI priest arrested on child molestation charges



Brian Amaral

The Providence Journal

Updated Nov. 5, 2020, 6:24 p.m. ET



A Rhode Island priest was arrested Thursday morning on charges of sexually abusing three boys decades ago.

R.I. priest, removed from ministry in 2009, now indicted on a sexual assault charge

Kevin Fisette, 66, who served in Pawtucket and Hopkinton, R.I., and now lives in Dayville, Conn., was indicted on one count of first-degree sexual assault.

By Brian Amaral Globe Staff, Updated June 6, 2022, 2:39 p.m.



PROVIDENCE

Former RI priest charged with sexual assault

by: **Adriana Rozas Rivera**

Posted: Jun 6, 2022 / 10:31 AM EDT

Updated: Jun 8, 2022 / 12:42 PM EDT

Former R.I. priest accused of sexual assault found incompetent to stand trial

Edward Kelley, 79, has dementia, and is unable to understand or assist in the proceedings against him, an expert who examined him testified in Superior Court on Friday

By Brian Amaral Globe Staff, Updated February 11, 2022, 1:03 p.m.



Former RI priest who served in at least 4 parishes facing sex-assault charges



Tom Mooney

The Providence Journal

July 30, 2021 | Updated Aug. 2, 2021, 9:29 a.m. ET

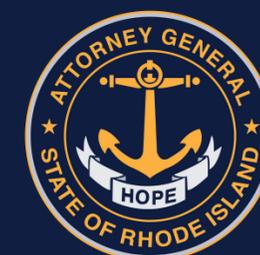


Outcomes



Criminally charged 4 current and former priests

- John Petrocelli (P1-2020-3184A)
- James Silva (P1-2021-3378A)
- Kevin Fisette (P1-2022-1857A)
- Edward Kelley (deceased)

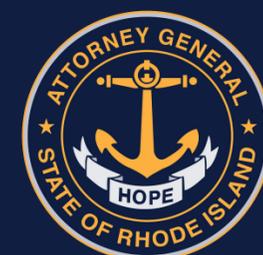


Outcomes



Identified additional credibly accused clergy

- The Diocese's List of Credibly Accused Clergy named **51 clergy** in 2019
- The Diocese added **4** additional clergy to its List since 2019 **because of action by this Office and State Police**
- This Report includes **75 clergy** deemed by the Attorney General to have been credibly accused



20 Additional Priests Identified in AG Report

Roger Argencourt

John Doran

Alfred Lonardo

Robert Barnes

Michael Dziob

Thomas Manu

Francis Battel

Raphael Edes

John O'Neil

Mario Bordignon

John Feeney

Paul Reynolds

Vincent Cavanaugh

John Flanagan

Alfred Santagata

Eugene Corbesero

Joseph Lacasse

Paul Tousignant

John Crafton

Norman LeBeouf

Priests with the Greatest Reported Number of Child Victims

At least six priests reportedly abused 10 or more children:

William O'Connell (23)

Brendan Smyth (17)

Robert Marcantonio (17)

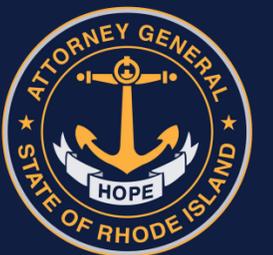
Edmond Micarelli (16)

Michael LaMountain (12)

Robert McIntyre (11)

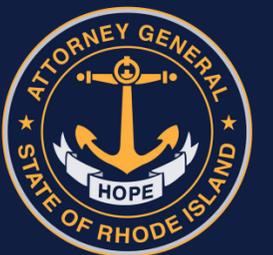
Common Survivor Characteristics

- ➔ Many victims were **altar servers or involved in other youth activities** in the Diocese at the time of their abuse
- ➔ Victims commonly came from particularly **devout families** and/or families who were especially friendly with their parish priests
- ➔ Clergy often preyed upon **vulnerable** children, or children with **difficult family circumstances**



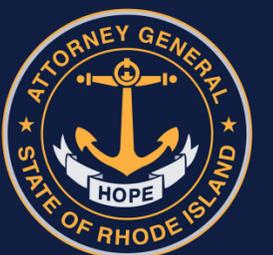
Delayed Disclosure

- ➔ We found that it took survivors an average of approximately **26 years** to report their abuse
- ➔ Modern research indicates that the majority of survivors who do disclose child sexual abuse wait **decades** to come forward
- ➔ Only about **10-15%** of child sexual abuse is ever reported to legal authorities



Harm to Survivors

- ➔ Survivors suffered long-term **mental, physical, and behavioral** health effects
 - including post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, addiction, mental health disorders, chronic physical pain, problems with intimacy and relationships, and even suicide
- ➔ Survivors also reported experiencing **professional, legal, and financial** difficulties



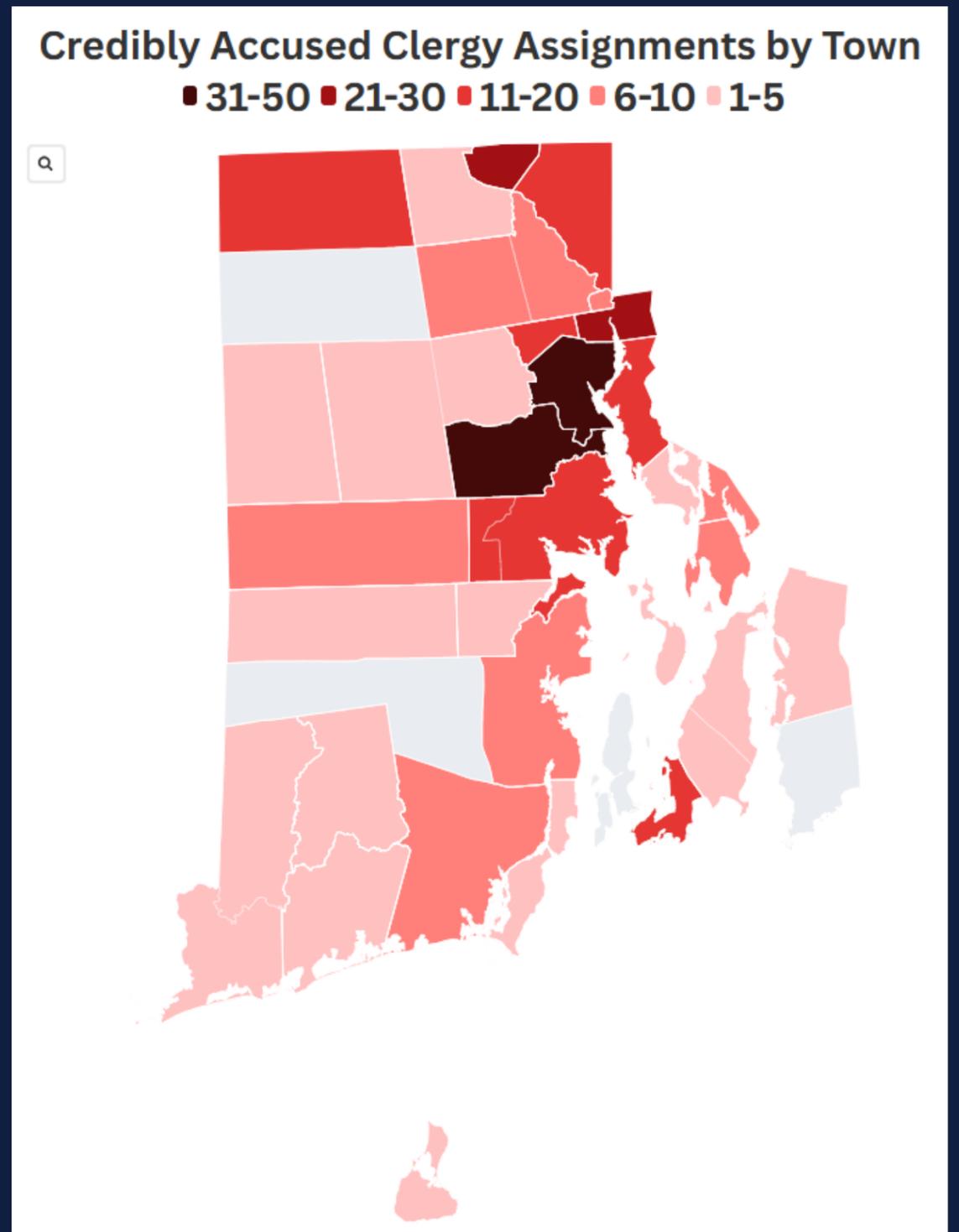
Major Trends

- ➔ The clergy sexual abuse crisis **impacted nearly every community** in Rhode Island.
- ➔ **The Diocese protected accused priests** with transfers, “treatment,” and promises of confidentiality.
- ➔ **For decades**, the Diocese **failed to refer to law enforcement** child sexual abuse complaints.



The clergy sexual abuse crisis **impacted nearly every community** in Rhode Island.

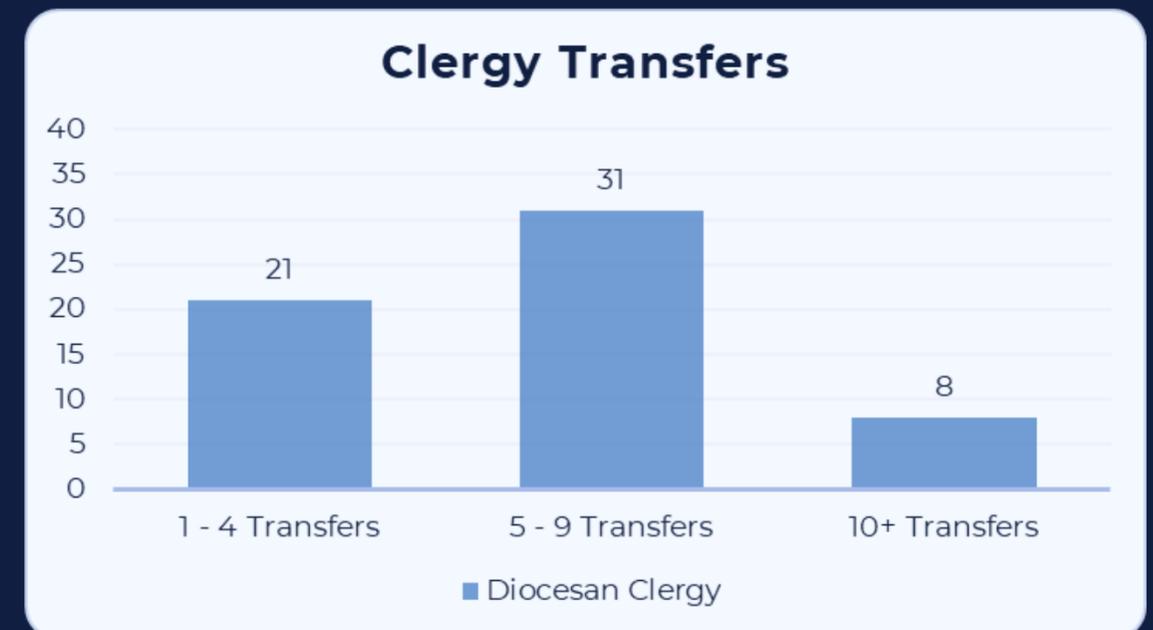
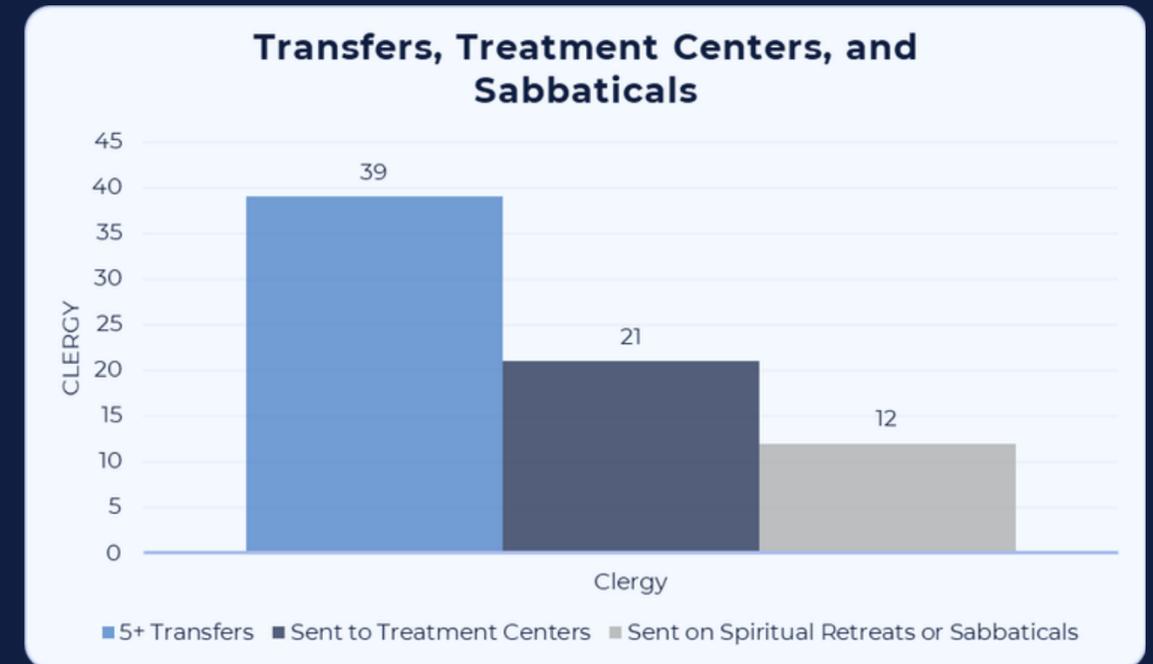
The Investigation identified over **300 documented victims** who reported allegations of child sexual misconduct against **75 clergy members**.



Historically, **the Diocese protected accused priests with transfers, “treatment,” and promises of confidentiality.**

For much of the Review Period, the Diocese of Providence’s response was driven, whenever possible, by a single focus: **concealment.**

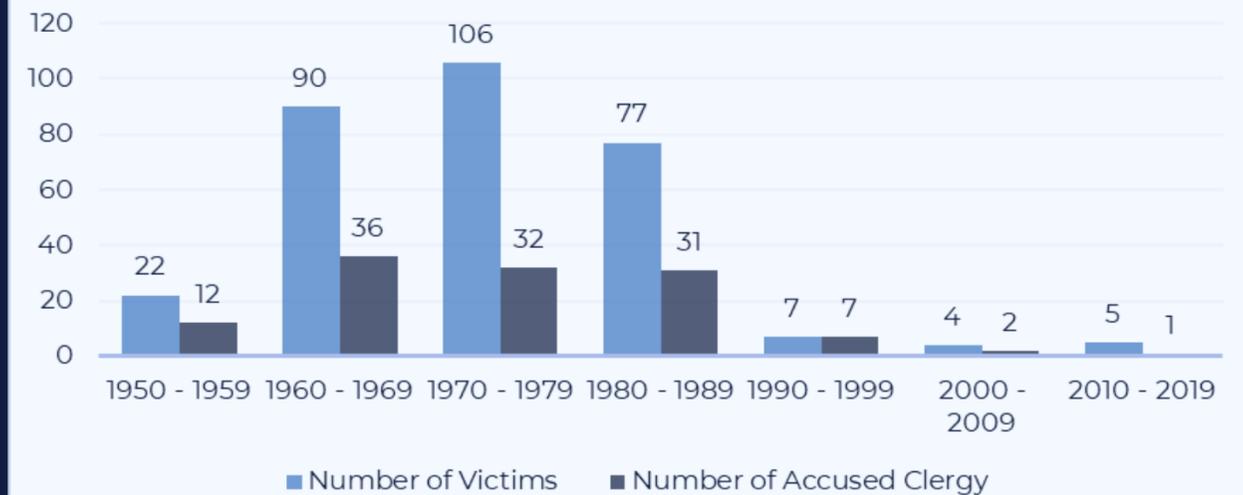
This failure was **corrected with the 2016 Letter of Understanding** with this Office.



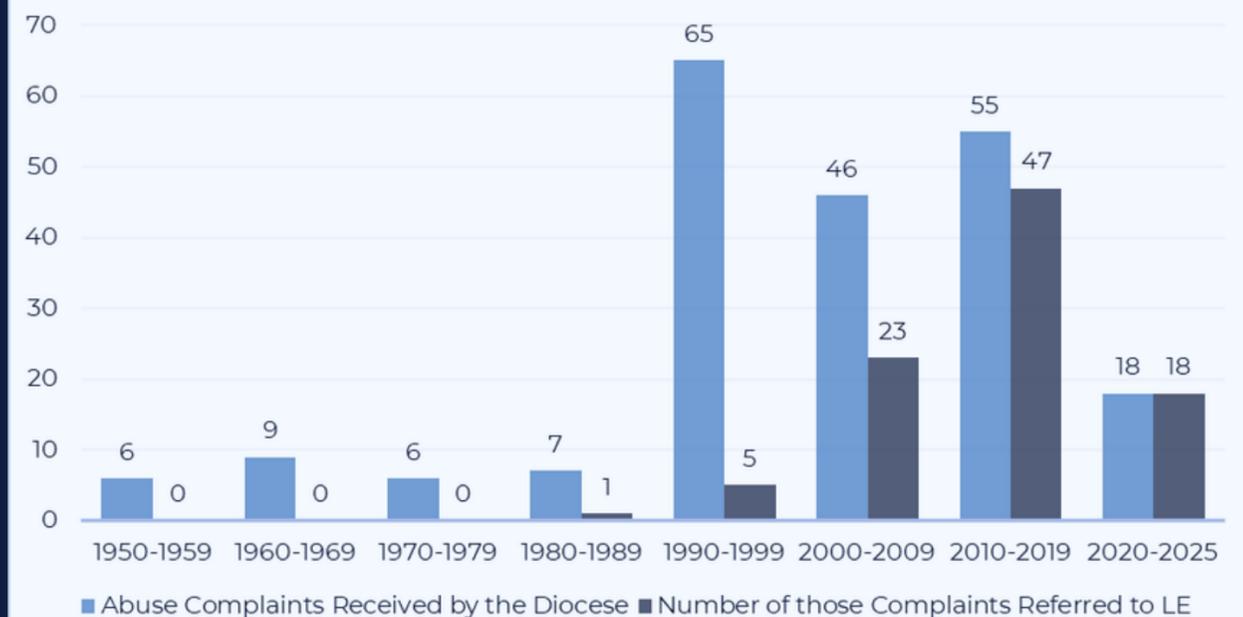
Historically, the **Diocese failed to refer to law enforcement child sexual abuse complaints.**

The Diocese's failure to report suspected abuse hindered criminal investigations and potential prosecutions, and **endangered children.**

Reported Abuse by Decade



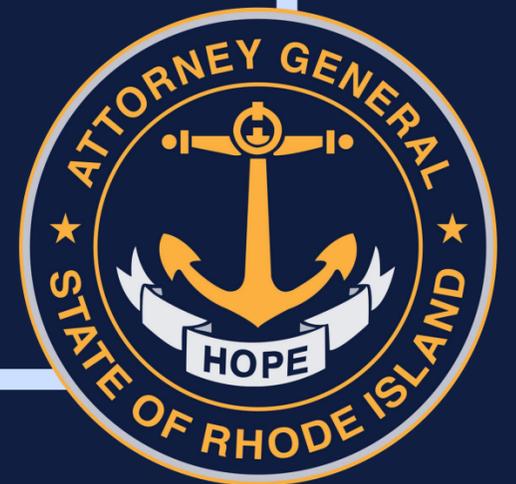
Referrals to Law Enforcement



“

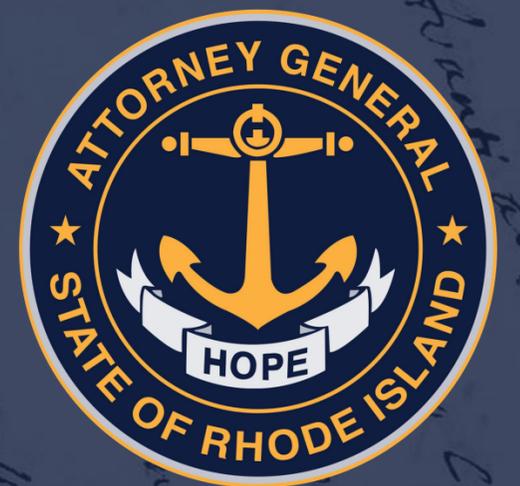
“...the Diocese’s **historical failure** to timely and appropriately respond to clergy abuse complaints **resulted in the sexual abuse of additional Rhode Island children.**”

Report, page 90



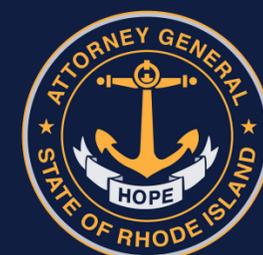
Chapter V

The Diocese's Historical Approaches to Child Sexual Abuse: 1950-2000



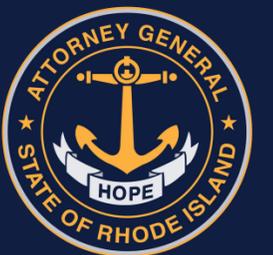
Historical Approaches: 1950-2000

- ➔ Bishops and other senior Diocesan officials promoted a culture of secrecy to **avoid “scandal”**
- ➔ Bishops frequently **transferred** priests accused of child sexual misconduct to new assignments—often to other parishes within Rhode Island
- ➔ Bishops sent accused priests to **“retreats,” “sabbaticals,” and “treatment”**



A Culture of Secrecy

- ➔ Bishops and other senior Diocesan officials prioritized avoiding “scandal” at the expense of survivors
- Diocesan officials favored **“in-house” responses** to reports of abuse
 - **Bishops promised confidentiality** to pedophile priests who self-reported
 - The Diocese **invoked religious rules and doctrines** to justify withholding information about abuse allegations from law enforcement

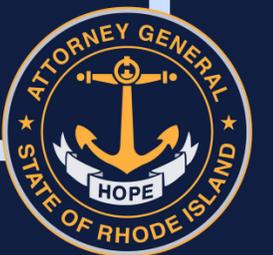


“Internal Forum”

“

“...the confidentiality necessary for candid disclosure and discussion between a priest and another person of facts and circumstances in the other person’s life which have moral and spiritual implications...The confidentiality arising from *internal forum* applies when the person speaking to the priest is a lay person [or] when he is himself a priest.”

Bishop Gelineau, 1997

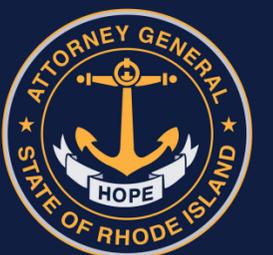


“Internal Forum”

- ➔ Broader than Confession: “moral and spiritual implications”
- ➔ Used in past as channel for priests to confidentially discuss abuse allegations with bishop
- ➔ **Still exempt** from Diocese’s written policy on “Cooperation with Civil Authorities” – Child Protection and Outreach Policy, Section 7.5

7.5 Cooperation with Civil Authorities

In the implementation of the above policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct and sexual harassment, it is the intention of the Bishop of Providence and those assisting him in these matters, to cooperate with law enforcement and governmental authorities and to complete necessary reporting, as required by law, provided that the cooperation does not require violation of legal rights of other persons, including rights of privacy and confidentiality based upon the seal of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and pursuant to the notion of Internal Forum.



Priest Shuffling

- ➔ Bishops frequently **transferred** accused priests to new assignments—often within Rhode Island
 - Transfers created a **false impression** that an accused priest no longer posed any risk
 - In reality, **transfers placed additional children at risk**
- ➔ Of the Diocesan clergy included in this Report,
 - **21 were transferred at least 1-5 times**
 - **31 were transferred 5-9 times**
 - **8 were transferred 10 or more times**



Example: Fr. Joseph McCra (1951-64)

Bishop Russell McVinney repeatedly transferred Father Joseph McCra in wake of complaints of known or suspected abuse:

1951-52

- Multiple complaints about McCra at **Our Lady of Lourdes Church** in Providence.
- **Response: Transfer to St. Joseph Church in Woonsocket.**

1953

- Letter to Bishop McVinney from St. Joseph pastor seeking McCra's removal: "he does not seem at present in a condition to exercise a fruitful ministry."
- **Response: Transfer to Our Lady of Consolation Church in Pawtucket.**

Example: Fr. Joseph McCra (1951-64)

1953: When transferring Father McCra to Our Lady of Consolation in November 1953, Bishop McVinney warned him:

You will understand by this appointment that it is no vindication of your **erratic and intolerable conduct** manifested in the past. I am interested in safeguarding your priesthood and in saving your immortal soul. Try now to cooperate with God's grace and enter this new field of priestly work with zeal and genuine devotedness and with a sense of true fellowship for your priestly associates. **If I receive any more complaints about your conduct I shall be forced to remove you from the roll** of those available for priestly service in the diocese.



Example: Fr. Joseph McCra (1951-64)

1955-56

While McCra still assigned to **Our Lady of Consolation**, late 1955, two boys reported in sworn affidavits that McCra served them alcohol before attempting to abuse them at his summer home.

Response: Four-month **suspension** followed by transfer to **Stella Maris Home for Convalescents** in Newport.

1957

November 1957, McCra requested a new assignment, “having done penance and atonement for two years.”

Response: Transfer in February 1958 to **Brothers of the Sacred Heart** in Burrillville.

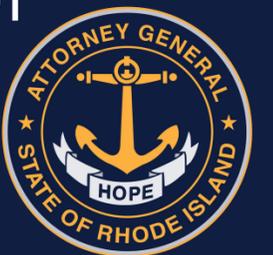
1961

By March 1961, McCra suspended yet again, moved to priests’ home in Montreal. In letter to McVinney, admitted to “immoral touches” but pleaded for removal of suspension.

Response: Transfer in September 1961 to **St. Ann Church** in Woonsocket as assistant pastor.

Example: Fr. Joseph McCra (1951-64)

- Father McCra remained at St. Ann's—in active ministry—until his death in May 1964.
- **Diocese of Providence did not include McCra on its 2019 List of Credibly Accused Clergy, nor did it initially provide McCra's records to this Office.**
- In 2023, an Assistant Attorney General spotted handwritten reference to McCra having been “accused in 1951 of molesting boys at his villa at a lake in Pascoag – relieved of duties.”
- Diocese subsequently produced McCra's files and added him to its List of Credibly Accused Clergy.



Example: Fr. Roland Lepire (1975-1980)

“Priest shuffling” continued under Bishop Louis Gelineau

- Father Roland Lepire accused of sexually abusing at least six boys between 8-14 years old from 1975 to 1980

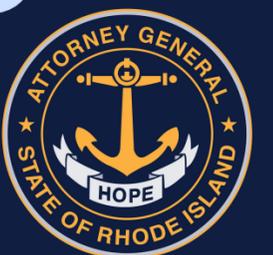
1978

While assigned to **St. Aloysius Church** in Woonsocket, Lepire reportedly put his hands down young boy’s pants.

The boy immediately told his mother and accompanied her to Woonsocket Police Department to report the allegations.

February 1979

Bishop Gelineau **transferred** Lepire to **St. Mary’s Church** in Cranston, on an “understanding” that no charges would be filed and Lepire would receive “therapy.”



Example: Fr. Roland Lepire (1975-1980)

- Just over a year later, May 1980, Bishop Gelineau removed Lepire from St. Mary's

MEMORANDUM TO BISHOP ANGELL AND PERSONNEL BOARD:

Re: Rev. Roland Lepire

Upon professional advice, I have directed Father Roland Lepire to move away from St. Mary Parish in Cranston. It appears that any parish involvement and ministry for him places too much pressure and results in depression bordering on illness. At this time a parish assignment for Roland is not possible.



Example: Fr. Roland Lepire (1975-1980)

- Lepire later admitted the real reason for his removal from St. Mary's: **he sexually abused “four twelve-year old boys . . .** he approached the Bishop and admitted his wrongdoing . . . the Bishop removed him from the parish . . .”
- In September 1980, Bishop Gelineau **again returned Lepire to ministry**, assigning him to St. Matthew's Parish in Central Falls. **There, Lepire reportedly sexually abused two more boys.**



Example: Father Normand Demers (1985)

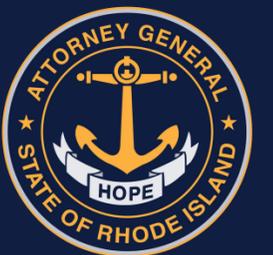
- In letters to **Bishop Gelineau a religious sister cited concerns about Demers having “inappropriate material”** in the rectory of St. Joseph’s, including **nude photographs** of males and females, and referenced **nine “young men” living in the rectory under his care**
- **Gelineau asked the sister not to report the information** because of the **scandal** that it could cause, particularly given the recent arrests of other Diocesan priests for sexually assaulting minors (euphemistically referred to by Bishop Gelineau as “special difficulties”)...



Example: Father Normand Demers (1985)

The issues you raise with regard to Father Demers are very serious ones. You may be sure that I take them that way. With the special difficulties we have had in the Diocese recently, I certainly want to avoid any further causes for scandal. I would hope, therefore, that you would not go to the public media. This would certainly be very harmful to us.

You mention the ultimate good of the Church, and it is my conviction now that by bringing it to my attention, you have fulfilled your responsibilities and I would ask you to leave the rest in my hands.

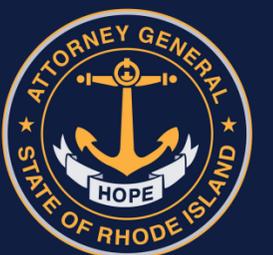


Example: Father Normand Demers (1985)

The sister responded to Bishop Gelineau a few weeks later:

Dear Bishop Gelineau:

I gratefully acknowledge your letter of February 5th. In this letter you stated:..."you have fulfilled your responsibility and I would ask you to leave the rest in my hands." On the contrary, my responsibility is not fulfilled until such time as you have taken action to meet the many spiritual needs of the parish. Assurances are not enough. To do nothing is to permit situations to continue.



Example: Father Normand Demers (1985)

Father Demers remained in ministry until his 2002 suspension; accused of abusing at least 11 boys and young men, including several after this 1986 episode.



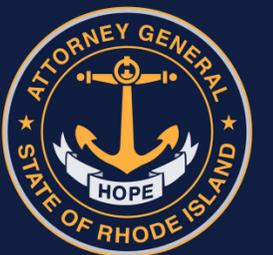
Spiritual “Retreats” & “Sabbaticals”

- ➔ Bishops also responded to abuse complaints using spiritual “**retreats**” and “**sabbaticals**”
- ➔ A further means of removing, and sequestering, priests accused of child sexual abuse
- ➔ Reflective of **grossly misguided view** that child sexual abuse is primarily a “**spiritual**” **failing**, to be overcome by renewed focus on vocation and faith, instead of a **crime** that should be reported to law enforcement.



Example: Father B. Samuel Turillo (1956)

- The Diocesan records relating to Father B. Samuel Turillo indicate that the Diocese learned of, but withheld from local authorities, **abuse allegations** against him in 1952 and 1953.
- Rather than notify the authorities, **Bishop McVinney** sent Father Turillo to the Monastery of St. Gabriel in Brighton, Massachusetts, for **two weeks of “penance” and “spiritual exercises,”** after which Turillo was **returned to full-time ministry,** and **reportedly sexually assaulted another young boy** between 1956 and 1958 at Holy Angels Church in Barrington.



Example: Father Alfred Derosiers (1970s)

- In March 1993, a woman contacted the Diocese to disclose that Father Alfred Desrosiers had **repeatedly sexually abused her** as a **15-year-old girl** two decades earlier . . . **Bishop Gelineau** subsequently **met with Father Derosiers**, who admitted to having an **“affair”** with the complainant.
- In response, **Bishop Gelineau arranged a “sabbatical/ continuing education program”** for Desrosiers at the Boston College Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry.



Example: Father Alfred Desrosiers (1970s)



Aware that Desrosiers had just admitted to an “affair” with a 15-year-old girl, **Bishop Gelineau nonetheless vouched for his admission to the program**, and said he was in “good standing”:

Dear Sister:

I write concerning the application of Father Alfred Desrosiers, a priest of this Diocese, who would like to be accepted in the Sabbatical Renewal in Ministry Program at Boston College.

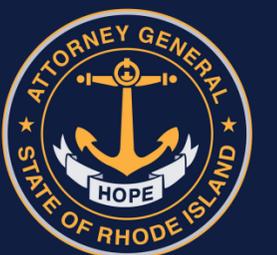
Father Desrosiers is presently on a leave of absence from any assignment in the Diocese, but he is a priest in good standing. He has great love for and dedication to the Church. I know of nothing that would prevent him from taking full advantage of the program or that would compromise the integrity of it.

I would be very grateful to you and those in charge of the program for a favorable consideration to Father Desrosiers' application.

Sincerely in Christ,

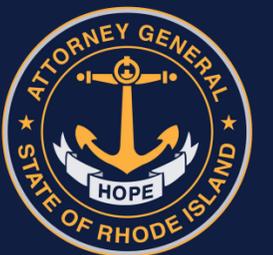
+ Louis E. Gelineau

Bishop of Providence



“Treatment” and “Treatment Centers”

- Catholic Bishops, including Bishop Gelineau, relied heavily on “treatment” and “treatment centers” as a further means of responding to complaints of abuse by clergy.
- According to the records, the Diocese sent at least **21 clergy** with documented allegations of child sexual abuse to treatment centers for evaluation or treatment. **Many were subsequently returned to active service, and several were accused of sexually abusing additional victims upon their return.**

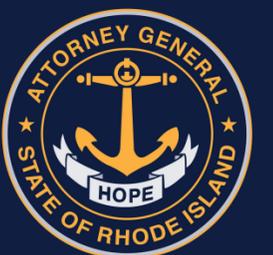


Example: Fr. Robert Marcantonio (1970s)

- ➔ In 1970, following accusations he had abused “ten to fifteen different boys,” Father Robert Marcantonio left St. Mary’s Church in Cranston and fled to Iowa to receive “treatment” from a psychiatrist who was also a priest.
- ➔ Instead of contacting authorities or seeking Marcantonio’s removal, Bishop McVinney expressed his support for Marcantonio to the therapist:

this matter. Father Marcantonio has been treated by two local psychiatrists, one a priest, both of whom expressed the judgment that he is incurable.

On this basis I cannot in good conscience sponsor him. If, however, you would like to help him as a friend, and you do seem to have some hope that you could be of help to him, I would be very grateful, and I am sure you would have a splendid reward if you succeed. I shall pray that your efforts will be highly successful.



Example: Fr. Robert Marcantonio (1970s)



In June 1971—only ten months after “treatment” began—the therapist declared Marcantonio effectively cured:

7 June 1971

Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D., LL.D.
Bishop of Providence
Rhode Island

Your Excellency:

Your Priest, the Rev. Robert A. Marcantonio, and I
have **successfully accomplished our therapeutic goal.**

Since he will continue to reside in Iowa during the
coming months, we will meet for “follow-up” sessions.



Example: Fr. Robert Marcantonio (1970s)



When Bishop Gelineau succeeded Bishop McVinney in 1972, Father Marcantonio (who remained in Iowa) wrote to Gelineau to explain his “situation”:

Most Reverend Bishop:

In September, 1970, I left the Diocese of Providence due to unfortunate actions on my own part. It was arranged with Bishop McVinney's permission, Archbishop James J. Byrne's approval and the help of Rev. Bernard S. Duval, M.D., that I would come to Ames for psychotherapy. The Archbishop gave permission for me to live here and work at St. Thomas Aquinas while undergoing the therapy. I was also to go to the university for classes.

All of this was successfully arranged. I went to therapy for the major part of last year and the therapy was deemed successful. In



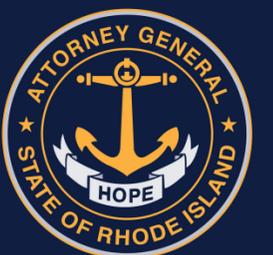
Example: Fr. Robert Marcantonio (1970s)

- ➔ Bishop Gelineau permitted Father Marcantonio to remain in Iowa—to obtain his doctorate in psychology. And in 1975, Bishop Gelineau **invited him to return to the Diocese:**

Dear Father Marcantonio:

As indicated to you by the Personnel Board, I am asking you to serve as a weekend assistant at St. John Vianney Church in Cumberland effective immediately. It is also understood that you retain the faculties of the Diocese of Providence.

It is a privilege for us to serve Our Lord and His Church as priests', as we know there is great work to be done for Him everywhere.



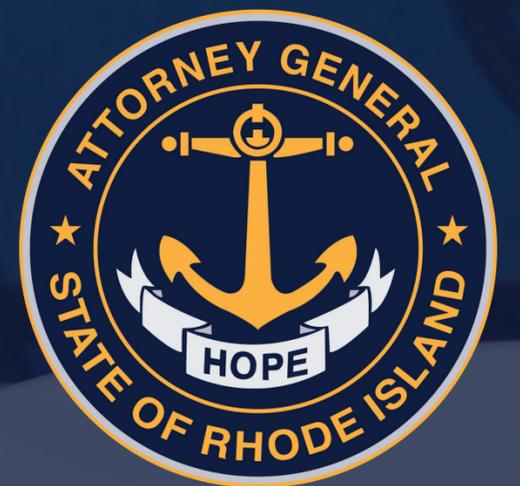
Example: Fr. Robert Marcantonio (1970s)

Father Marcantonio would later be accused of **sexually abusing three boys in Iowa, and several more upon his return to Rhode Island**



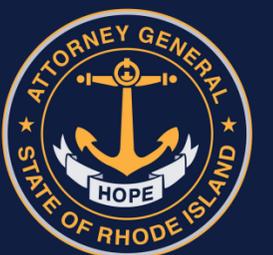
Chapter VI

The Diocese's Past Failures to Refer Child Sexual Abuse Complaints to Law Enforcement

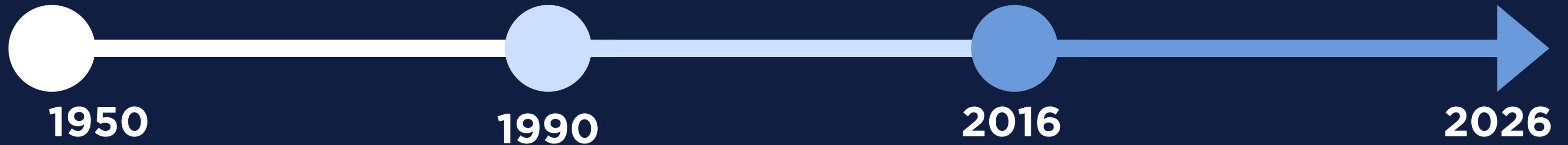


A Historical Failure

- ➔ Though Diocesan records document dozens of complaints since 1950, the **first documented referral to civil authorities was not until 1989**
- ➔ This **prevented additional clergy from being criminally charged and prosecuted for their crimes**
- ➔ Rather than report, **bishops** permitted accused priests **to remain in ministry**, with **little to no oversight** and **access to more children**



Evolution of Referrals to Law Enforcement



1950 - 1990

- Diocese officials failed to refer complaints to law enforcement
- The Diocese also withheld from law enforcement its knowledge of, and information regarding, additional complaints against priests whom law enforcement was investigating.

1990 - 2016

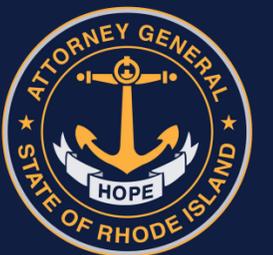
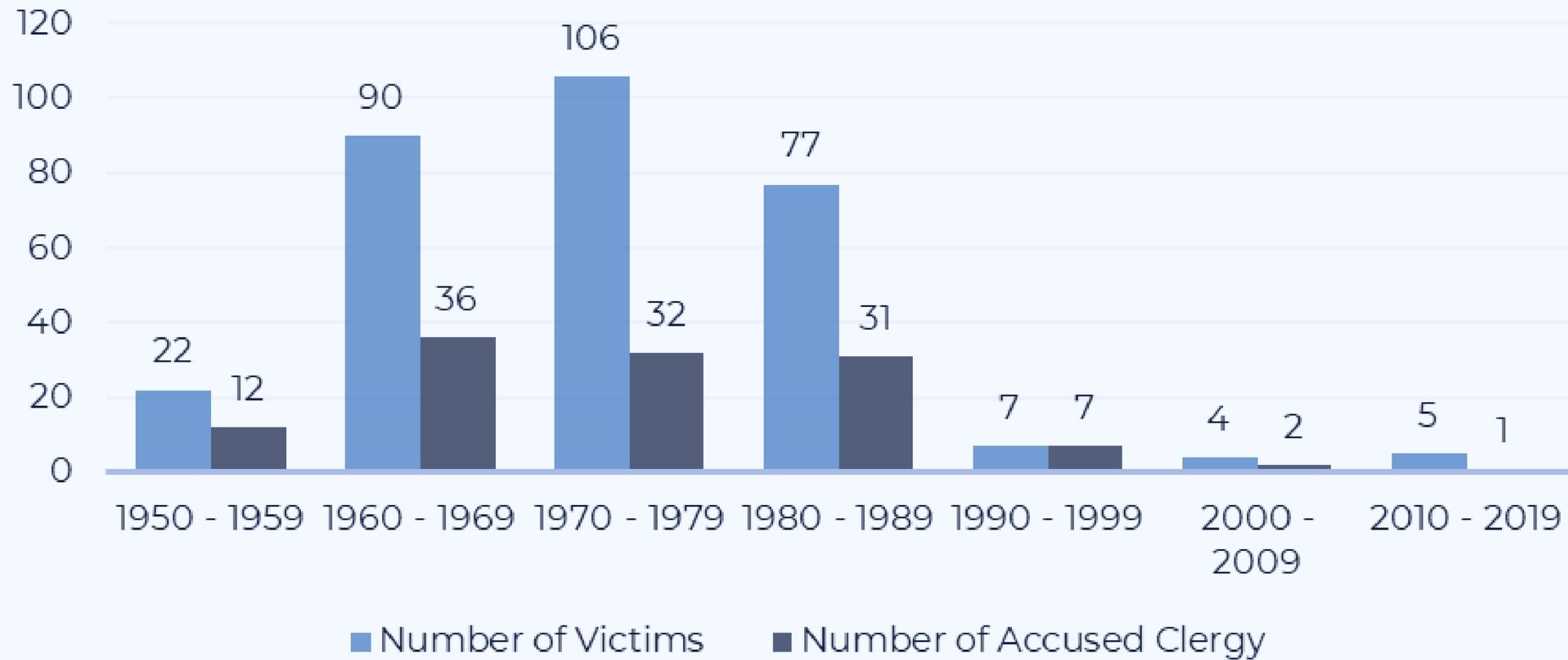
- The Diocese's law enforcement reporting practices began to marginally improve
- Diocese continued to significantly underreport clergy abuse complaints to law enforcement until the 2016 LOU between the Diocese and RIAG

2016 - Present

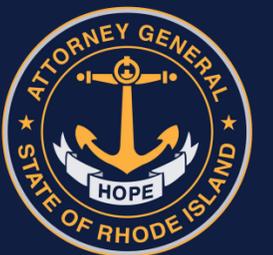
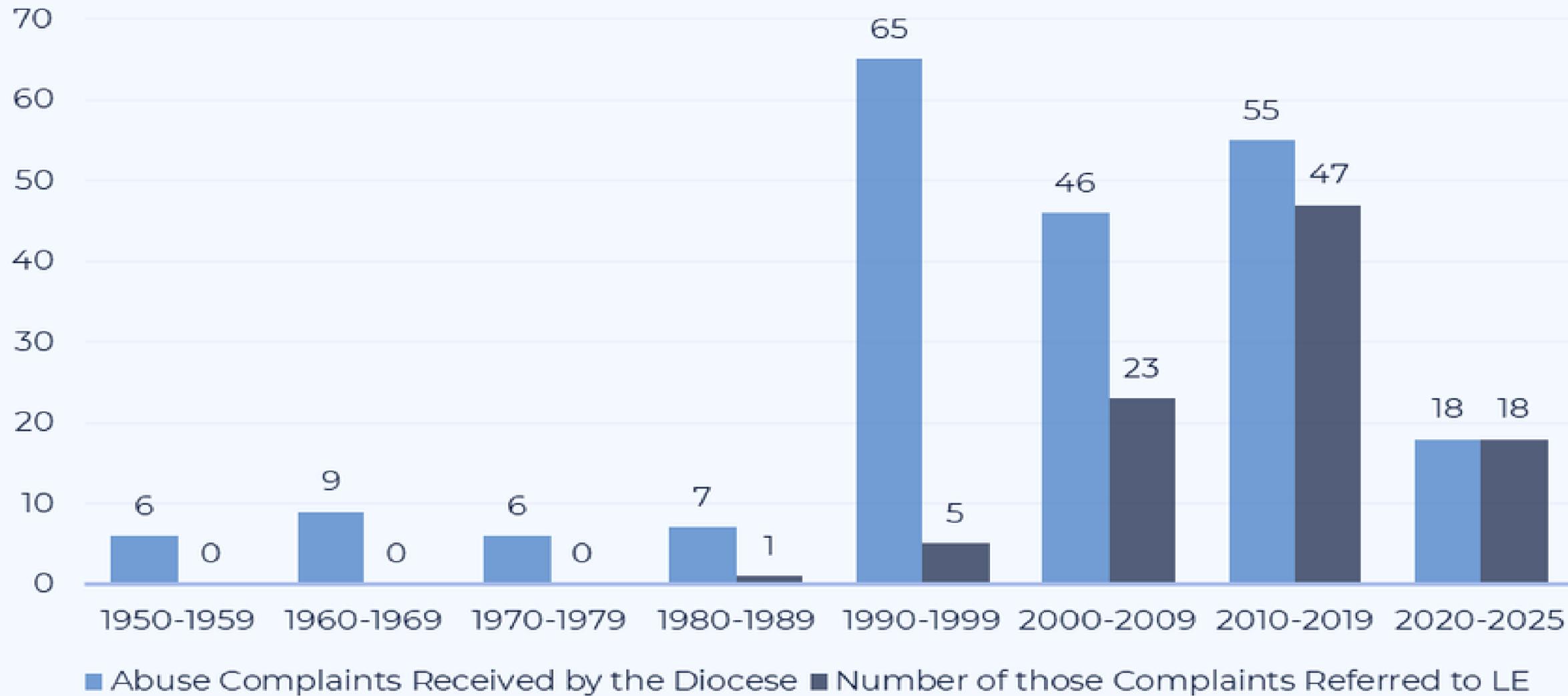
- Since the LOU, the Diocese has agreed to immediately notify law enforcement of any complaint it receives concerning child sexual abuse
- While voluntary, the Diocese's law enforcement reporting has greatly improved since the LOU's execution



Reported Abuse by Decade

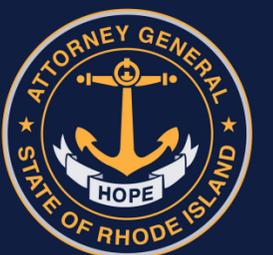


Referrals to Law Enforcement



Inconsistent Reporting into the 2010s

- ➔ Though the Diocese's law enforcement reporting improved into the 21st century, problems persisted:
 - Between 2000 and 2010, Diocese still referred **only half of the complaints it received** to law enforcement.
- ➔ Most reporting **entirely voluntary**, *and* **subject to Diocese's shifting thresholds of what warranted law enforcement contact.**
- ➔ Continued problems, and need for solution, illustrated by 2011 mishandling of complaint against **Deacon Laurence Gagnon.**



Example: Deacon Laurence Gagnon (2011)

- June 2011, Diocese received complaint that Deacon Gagnon had **pulled down pants** of several sixth-grade boys at St. Joseph School in West Warwick.
- Director of Compliance Robert McCarthy dismissed the case as **merely “poor judgment,”** not criminal nor worthy of reporting to law enforcement under mandated reporter law.
- Days later, law enforcement contacted by concerned principal, who had repeatedly expressed to Dir. McCarthy his view that the allegations should be reported to the authorities.



Example: Deacon Laurence Gagnon (2011)

- Subsequent investigation by the West Warwick Police revealed **this was far more than “poor judgment”**
- Several boys told the police that Gagnon had **repeatedly touched their groins**
- Deacon Gagnon soon confessed to the police that he had **fondled several boys’ genitals**
- Gagnon charged, and subsequently pled nolo contendere, to several counts of second-degree child molestation



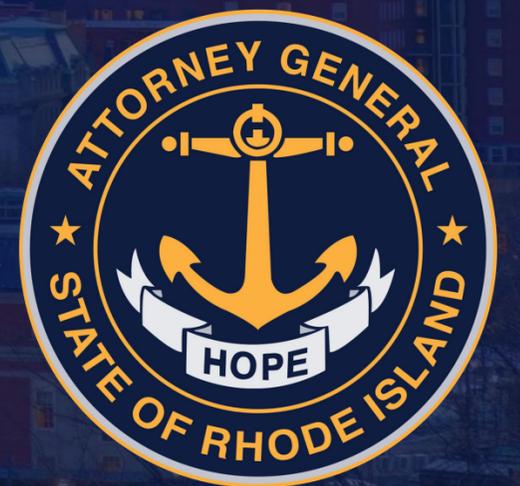
2016 Letter of Understanding

- Gagnon case exposed continued problems with Diocese's investigation and reporting of complaints of clergy misconduct involving children
- In response, Office of Attorney General engaged Diocese on improved process for reporting of such complaints
- Culminated in 2016 Letter of Understanding (LOU) between Attorney General Peter Kilmartin and Bishop Tobin
- Since LOU, Diocese has agreed to immediately refer *any* complaint it receives, regardless of credibility, statute of limitations, victim age, accused perpetrator alive or dead



Chapter VII

The Diocese's Reforms and Responses to Clergy Abuse: 1990 to Present



Early Attempts at Reform: 1990s

1990

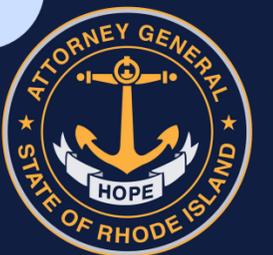
Bishop Gelineau promulgated its first official **“policy and procedures concerning reports of sexual misconduct”**

1992

Bishop Gelineau established the **“Advisory Review Committee”** of religious and lay professionals to **“advise the Bishop”** in responding to abuse.

1993

Bishop Gelineau established the **Office of Education and Compliance** to receive and investigate child sexual abuse complaints

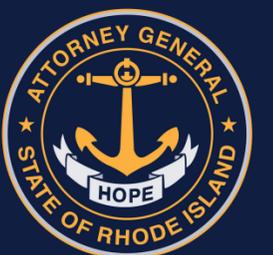


Early Attempts at Reform: 1990s

1990

The Diocese promulgated its first official “**policy and procedures concerning reports of sexual misconduct**”

- **Did not apply** to physical touching of non-intimate body parts or non-physical sexual misconduct, including grooming behaviors.
- **Strictly internal reporting**; neither required nor encouraged referral of complaints to civil authorities (except under mandatory reporting law)



Early Attempts at Reform: 1990s

1992

Bishop Gelineau established the **“Advisory Review Committee”** of religious and lay professionals to “advise the Bishop” in responding to abuse.

- Publicly touted by Bishop Gelineau as a hallmark of the Diocese’s efforts to “do all in our power to eliminate the scourge of clergy sexual abuse and assist its victims”
- **Diocesan records suggest this group hardly met, possibly only twice.**

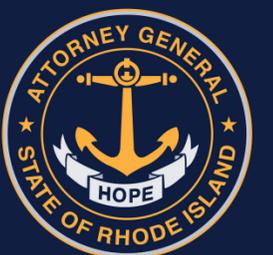


Early Attempts at Reform: 1990s

1993

The Diocese established the **Office of Education and Compliance** to receive and investigate child sexual abuse complaints

- Bishop Gelineau hired Director Robert McCarthy, who served from 1993 until his retirement in 2015.
- From OEC's inception, **a lack of clear, written guidelines for investigations, and absence of meaningful oversight of investigative decision making**, has led to disparate, unjust, and sometimes unsafe outcomes.



2002 National Response

June 2002

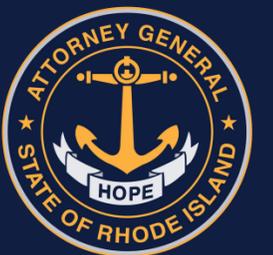
Dallas Charter

- outlined a series of new steps that bishops in every American diocese committed to take in response to clergy abuse
- aimed to **strengthen reporting, remove** credibly accused priests, and establish a **majority-lay review board**

Nov. 2002

Essential Norms

- converted the Charter's principles into **binding requirements** for each diocese
- required a **written policy** on child sexual abuse, a **victim assistance designate** to coordinate assistance for victims, and a **review board** to advise the bishop



Diocese of Providence Post-*Charter* Reforms

2002

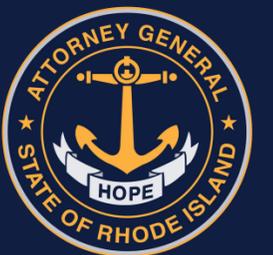
The Diocese established the **Diocesan Review Board**, which to this day functions as an advisory board for the Bishop in assessing allegations of child sexual abuse

2003

The Diocese established the **Office of Outreach and Prevention**, which coordinates **pastoral care** and **counseling payments or reimbursements** for victims

2004

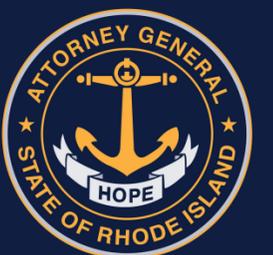
The Diocese promulgated the first version of its **Child Protection and Outreach Policy**, which required a **code of ethics, trainings,** and **background checks** for clergy and staff



Yet, concerns remain...

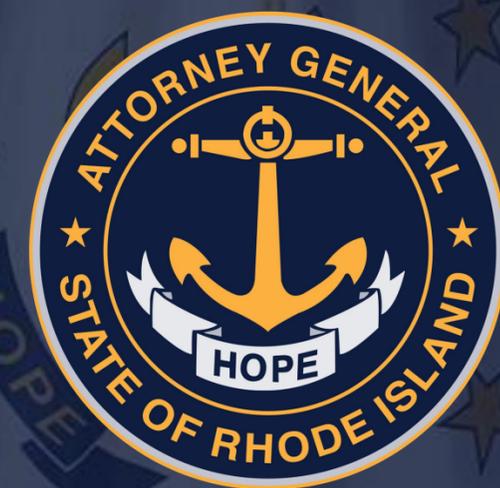


Both the *Charter* and *Essential Norms* leave broad discretion to bishops and local dioceses when it comes to **actually implementing** their principles.



Chapter VIII

Concerns with the Diocese's Modern Responses to the Clergy Abuse Crisis



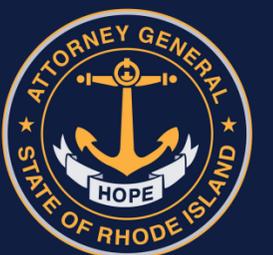
Concerns with Modern Responses

- ➔ Inconsistent and inadequate investigations
- ➔ Failure to document Review Board determinations
- ➔ The Diocese's limited referrals to the Vatican
- ➔ No monitoring of credibly accused priests
- ➔ Continued lack of transparency and accountability



Investigative Shortcomings

- ➔ Failure to accurately identify and appropriately respond to grooming behavior and other inappropriate conduct with children
- ➔ Failure to consistently investigate third-party and anonymous reports of abuse
- ➔ Failure to consistently investigate allegations against deceased or inactive priests



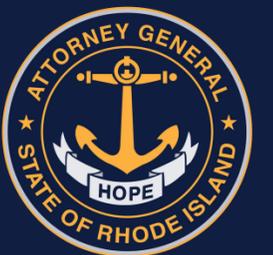
Investigative Shortcomings

- ➔ Continued requests of victims to take polygraphs
- ➔ Lack of clear written investigatory guidelines
- ➔ Lack of clear investigative timeframes and notification of victims
- ➔ Lack of clear oversight by the Review Board



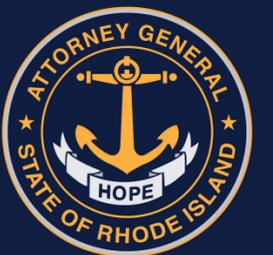
Example: Father Francis Santilli (2014)

- **In 2014**, Dennis Laprade reported to the Diocese that Father Santilli sexually abused him in the early 1980s, when he was an altar boy at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Providence.
- Mr. Laprade also identified by name two brothers who he suspected may also have been abused by Father Santilli.
- **No indication that anyone from Diocese attempted to contact those individuals, and Bishop Tobin permitted Santilli to remain in ministry.**



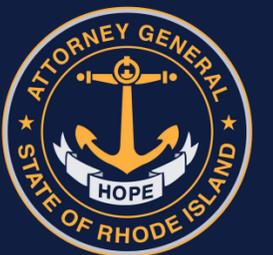
Example: Father Francis Santilli (2014)

- Nearly eight years later, in 2021, a third party contacted both Diocese and law enforcement to identify the same two brothers as victims of Santilli
- **Resulted in a criminal investigation, Santilli's suspension, removal, and referral to Vatican, and the Diocese naming Santilli on its Credibly Accused List.**



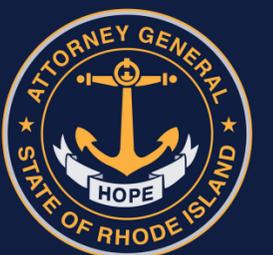
Failure to Document Review Board Investigations and Determinations

- ➔ Deliberate absence of records of the Review Board's discussions or determinations obscure its role and effectiveness.
- ➔ This Office sought to interview Board members and Diocesan officials to gain a more fulsome understanding of how the Board functions – **these requests were inexplicably denied.**



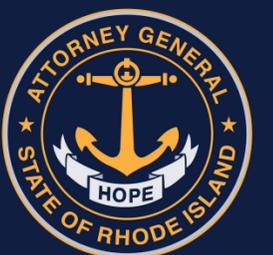
The Diocese's Limited Referrals to the Vatican

- ➔ “Zero tolerance” policy of *Dallas Charter* and *Essential Norms* requires permanent removal, and possible dismissal from priesthood, for “even a single act of sexual abuse,” following “appropriate process in accord with canon law”
- ➔ General rule that bishops refer to Vatican all complaints containing “any semblance of truth”
- ➔ Diocese of Providence appears to have referred to the Vatican far fewer complaints than “zero tolerance” contemplates: since 2002, only 9 priests referred vs. 21 priests who have been subject to complaints of child sexual misconduct.



The Diocese's Limited Referrals to the Vatican

- ➔ Among limited cases referred to Vatican, Bishop Thomas Tobin repeatedly sought leniency for credibly accused priests, recommending against their removal from the priesthood and instead suggesting a “life of prayer and penance”
- ➔ For each of Fathers Timothy Gorton (2012), Barry Meehan (2013), John Allard (2013), and B. Samuel Turillo (2016), Bishop Tobin told the Vatican: “I do not believe [Father] to be a danger to young people...”



The Diocese's Limited Referrals to the Vatican

2012

While realizing the particularly serious nature of the allegations, I wish to balance this with Father Gorton's faithful ministry to the Diocese for nearly 30 years, with no other allegation. **At this time, I do not believe Father Gorton to be a danger to young people.**

2013

While realizing the particularly serious nature of the allegations, I wish to balance this with Father Meehan's faithful ministry to the Diocese for 35 years. Included in the *Acta* are letters of support for Father Meehan that attest to his love for the priesthood. **At this time, I do not believe Father Meehan to be a danger to young people.** However, due to the nature of the

2013

Monsignor Allard is 64 years old, and will never again serve in active ministry. **At this time, I do not believe he is a danger to young people,** and I respectfully remind the Congregation that this is the first and only known allegation of abuse against him. For these compelling and grave reasons, I do not recommend that the Congregation impose a penalty; and, I believe that an

2016

At this time, I do not believe Father Turillo is a danger to young people, and I respectfully recommend that the Congregation not impose a penalty in this matter. In many

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence



The Diocese's Limited Referrals to the Vatican

Bishop Tobin likewise advocated for Father Francis Santilli when referring his case to the Vatican in 2022:

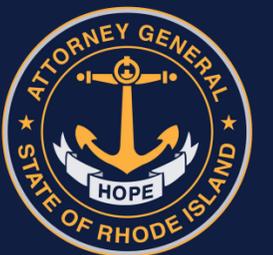
The accusations regarding Fr. Santilli's behavior are repugnant, given the nature of the actions and the age of the victims. Under no circumstances should Fr. Francis Santilli return to public ministry. The notoriety of this case in the local media also prohibits Fr. Santilli from ever presenting himself as a priest in public.

The alleged abuse which occurred at the hands of Fr. Santilli demands justice – not only for his victims, but also for the Body of Christ, the Church, which he has harmed by his crimes. Nevertheless, Fr. Francis Santilli has also exercised his priesthood for over 40 years in an exemplary fashion, and without scandal. These circumstances should be taken into consideration in the adjudication of eventual penalties, if warranted.



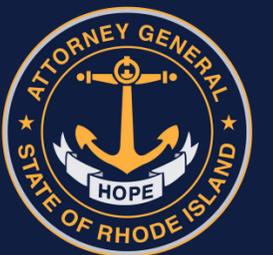
No Monitoring of Accused Priests

- ➔ **To date, it appears the Diocese of Providence lacks any formal or informal policy or practice of monitoring known, living, credibly accused clergy.**
- ➔ In 2013, the Diocese admitted that it still had “no set program in place to monitor ex-priests who admit to molestation.”



Example: Monsignor John Allard (2013)

- In 2013, after victim contacted the Diocese, Monsignor John Allard admitted during internal OEC interview that he **repeatedly sexually abused 15-year-old boy** between 1981 and 1983.



Example: Monsignor John Allard (2013)

- October 2013, Vatican imposed “life of prayer and penance,” while also cautioning Bishop Tobin that “**further canonical and pastoral vigilance** regarding Msgr. Allard is **left to the discretion of Your Excellency**, including monitoring and ensuring that the priest is not a danger to minors.”



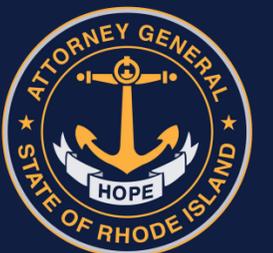
Example: Monsignor John Allard (2013)

- **No indication of any steps taken—and Allard returned to part-time kitchen work at his last parish assignment, St. Agatha's in Woonsocket, around November 2014, seemingly without the Diocese even being aware of the arrangement.**



Continued Lack of Transparency and Accountability

- ➔ The Diocese's Credibly Accused List fails to include the names of several additional clergy that are the subject of credible child sexual misconduct allegations
- ➔ The current Diocese List also omits certain critical facts and assignment histories that are essential to full transparency and accountability



Chapter IX

Recommendations to the Diocese of Providence



Reestablish a Survivor Compensation Program

- ➔ Following a 2002 mass settlement, the Diocese implemented two survivor compensation programs
- ➔ Bishop Tobin and Review Board terminated these programs in 2007, on the grounds that they were time limited and intended only to “clear the decks” of follow-up litigation after 2002 settlement
- ➔ Since these programs were terminated, survivors have continued to come forward



Reestablish a Survivor Compensation Program

- ➔ We recommend that the Diocese of Providence establish a **new, independent financial compensation program** for survivors
- ➔ Modeled after programs already adopted by other prominent archdioceses and dioceses during the last decade



Compensation Program Models

2016

Archdiocese of New York's
“Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program”

~\$40 million to 189 survivors

2018

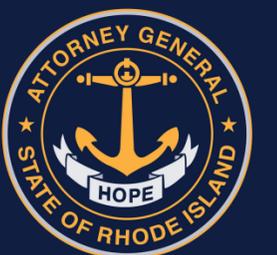
Archdiocese of Philadelphia's
“Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program”

~\$78 million to 438 survivors

2019

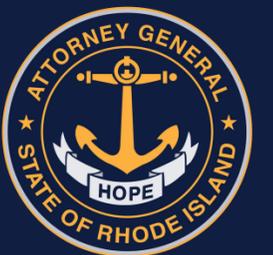
Six major CA dioceses (including Archdiocese of Los Angeles) established
“Independent Compensation Program”

~\$24 million to 197 survivors



Clergy Monitoring

- ➔ **Still no policy or practice in place** for monitoring credibly accused clergy members
- ➔ The Diocese should retain a lay monitor with law enforcement experience to develop **individualized safety plans for every credibly accused priest**
 - These plans impose conditions designed to ensure that a priest does not pose any danger to minors
 - Plans should be subject to regular review



Preventive Measures

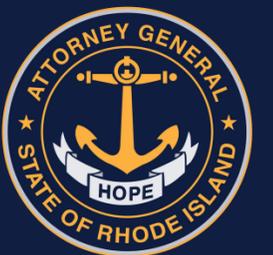
- ➔ Additional recommended steps are **aimed at stopping child sexual abuse before it happens**
 - ➔ By responding only **reactively**, the Diocese **misses important warning signs and opportunities to prevent abuse**
-

Recommended preventative measures include:

- ✓ Nationwide background checks for all clergy
- ✓ Mandated investigation and disciplining of grooming behaviors
- ✓ Improve preventative trainings and internal reporting procedures
- ✓ Enhance electronic communications guidelines

Internal Investigations

- The Diocese should promulgate concrete written guidelines for internal investigations of child sexual misconduct complaints.
- Recommendations aim to ensure that the Diocese **promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigates each and every sexual misconduct complaint** that it receives.



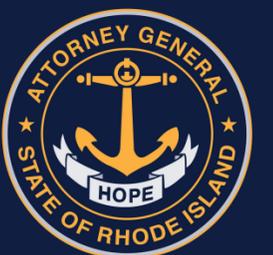
Internal Investigations

- Clarify that Office of Compliance will thoroughly **investigate every complaint it receives**, regardless of age or status of accused or date of alleged misconduct
- Prohibit **use of polygraphs on victims** or requests that victims submit to polygraphs
- Impose reasonable timeframes and deadlines
 - Example: in 2024, Diocese of Brooklyn pledged to reach credibility determination within 20 days of receiving complaint.



Expand the List of Credibly Accused Priests

- ➔ **Add the 20 individuals** included in Appendix A who do not already appear on the Diocese's List
- ➔ Expand the information that it provides with respect to each credibly accused clergy on the List
- ➔ Include **additional credibly accused** religious order and extern clergy who served in Rhode Island.



A New Letter of Understanding

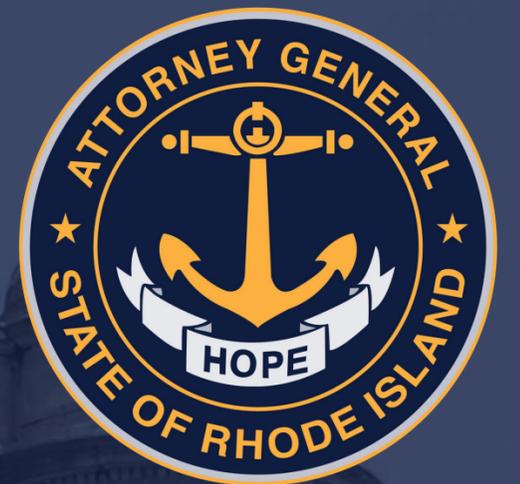
- We recommend that the Diocese **enter into a new LOU** with this Office to facilitate continued oversight of the Diocese's response to the clergy abuse crisis
- The Diocese should continue referring all complaints
 - The scope of reportable allegations under the LOU should be expanded
 - The amount of information that the Diocese provides to this Office should be expanded



Chapter X

Legislative

Recommendations



Legislative Recommendations

- ➔ Adopt a Grand Jury Reporting Statute
- ➔ Expand the Limitations Period for Second-Degree Sexual Assault from three to 10 years
- ➔ Revive Civil Claims Against Institutional Defendants
- ➔ Amend the Mandatory Reporting Statute



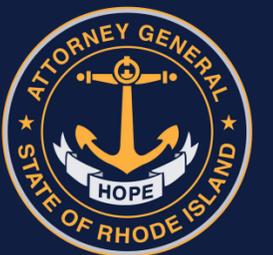
Grand Jury Reporting

- ➔ Authorizes grand juries to issue reports and establishes a process for Superior Court review and approval prior to public release
- ➔ Would be used sparingly in cases where no indictment is returned but there is a **significant public interest** in understanding the circumstances or findings



Second-Degree Sexual Assault Statute of Limitations

- Establishes a **ten-year statute of limitations** for second-degree sexual assault, measured from the date of the offense
- If the victim was under 18 at the time of the offense, 10 years from the victim's 18th birthday, whichever is later.



Second-Degree Sexual Assault Statute of Limitations

- ➔ Also provides that the statute of limitations for third-degree sexual assault is measured from the victim's 18th birthday rather than the date of the offense.



Civil Claims Against Institutional Defendants

- ➔ Amends Rhode Island's civil statute of limitations for child sexual abuse
- ➔ Permits prospective plaintiffs whose claims previously expired to sue the institutions and supervisors responsible for enabling or covering up their abuse during a “**revival window**.”

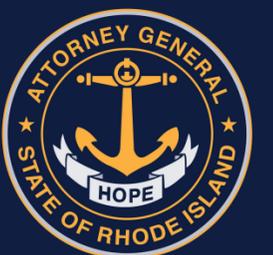


Amend the Mandatory Reporting Statute

→ Today, the Diocese's law enforcement reporting is largely voluntary

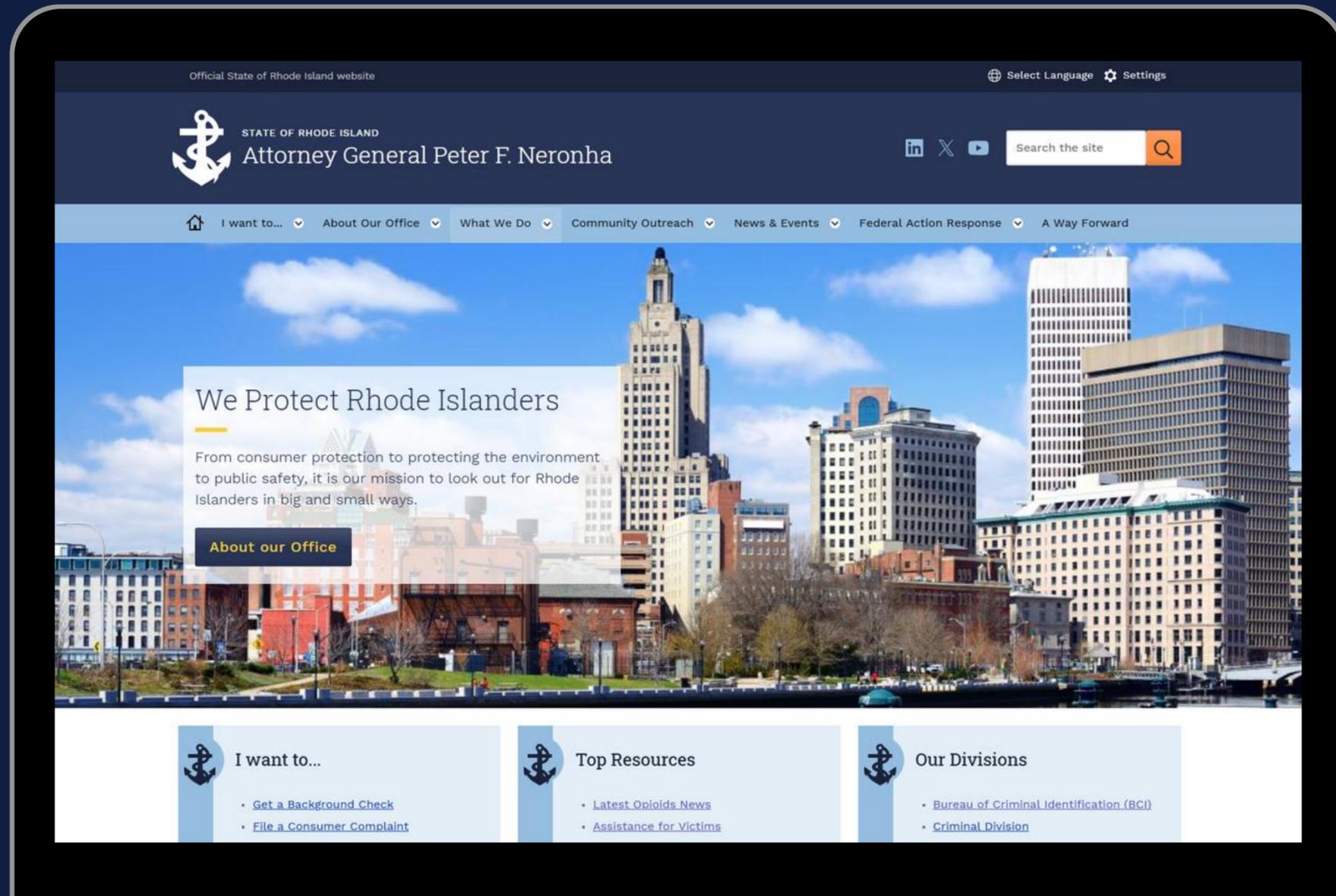
- Most of its reports are the function of this Office's existing Letter of Understanding with the Diocese that took effect in 2016

→ Our proposed amendments to the Mandatory Reporting Statute explicitly **require the reporting of known or suspected child sexual abuse in religious institutions committed by clergy, other religious leaders, or staff**



The list of clergy deemed credibly accused by the Attorney General is subject to change at the discretion of the Office.

*The Office of Attorney General and the Rhode Island State Police urge victims and any other persons with information regarding possible child sexual abuse or related crimes to call the State Police Special Victims Unit's dedicated clergy abuse hotline at **401-764-0142**.*



 riag.ri.gov/diocese-report

Resources

→ State Police Special Victims Unit's dedicated clergy abuse hotline: **401-764-0142**

Day One

Crisis Line: (800) 494-8100

Website: dayoneri.org

FSRI

Phone: (401) 519-2280

Website: familyserviceri.org

Tides Family Services

Phone: (401) 615-9374

Website: tidesfs.org

Friends Way

Phone: (401) 921-0980

Website: friendsway.org

Sojourner House

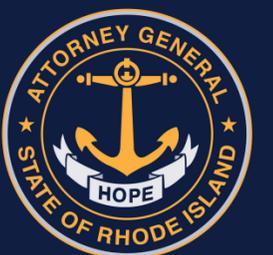
Phone: (401) 861-6191

Website: sojournerri.org

Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center

Phone: (401) 738-9700

Website: ebccenter.org





“For too many children, time and life stopped at the time of [their] abuse.”

-A Rhode Island Victim