

Diocese of New Ulm again in compliance with USCCB ‘Charter’

by Aldean Hendrickson
Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator

The Diocese of New Ulm is again fully compliant with the U.S. bishops’ “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.”

So stated a letter dated Oct. 24, 2013, to Bishop John M. LeVoir from StoneBridge Business Partners, the independent audit firm currently charged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) with auditing U.S. dioceses for “Charter” compliance.

The letter said that the firm had completed their review of the data submitted to them for the 2012-2013 audit year, and that the diocese is once again in full compliance with the requirements of the “Charter.” Since 2002, when the Catholic bishops of the United States adopted the “Charter,” dioceses across the country have been engaged in a concerted effort to do more – and to do better – in preventing further harm to children and young people by clergy and others.

Every year each of the 195 Catholic dioceses within the United States is required to take part in a review of its ongoing safe environment efforts in the form of a professional audit conducted by an outside firm.

This involves the compilation of data in several areas, including:

- the status of and response to any current allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy.
- the availability of current policies, procedures, and published standards of conduct to ensure a safe environment for children and youth.
- the existence of an active review board and victim assistance coordinator.
- appropriate background screening for adults who work with minors.
- consistency and transparency in the handling of allegations of sexual abuse by clergy.

Once every three years, the compliance review includes an on-site audit where auditors review supporting documentation for these data points and interview diocesan staff members involved in these programs.

The Diocese of New Ulm’s most recent on-site audit was for the 2011-2012 audit year, which also returned a result of compliant in all areas.

The Diocese of New Ulm takes very seriously the obligation we all share to keep our children and youth safe, especially in our parishes, churches, and schools.

The diocesan Safe Environment Office oversees a number of activities and initiatives relating to this important task, including:

- criminal background checks for all clergy, employees, and volunteers who work with children and youth in any of our parishes, schools, or diocesan programs.
- mandatory awareness training for clergy, employees, and volunteers to help them recognize, identify, report, and prevent the behaviors of those who would harm children and youth.
- an ongoing educational program for all children and youth in our Catholic schools and religious education programs.

In addition, Bishop LeVoir is a current member of the USCCB Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People.