

Diocese of Laredo
Communication Policy

Purpose: To provide the procedures of the Diocese of Laredo regarding the communication(s) with the public and community affected by allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, other Church personnel, volunteer(s), independent contractor(s), or religious man or woman working on behalf of the Diocese of Laredo.

Scope and Objectives: This policy provides an overview of the procedures covering both external and internal communications to address allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, other Church personnel, volunteer(s), independent contractor(s), or religious man or woman working on behalf of the Diocese of Laredo, to ensure it is performed in a coordinated, efficient, and professional manner.

- **External Communication:** External communication(s) are those communications that are intended to reach the public and communities in the Diocese of Laredo and outside the Diocese of Laredo directly affected by allegations of sexual abuse of a minor.
- **Internal Communication:** Internal communication(s) are those communications that are intended for clergy and all other Church personnel in the Diocese of Laredo directly affected by allegations of sexual abuse of a minor.

This Communication Policy is adopted in response to Article 7 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* developed by the Ad Hoc Committee for Sexual Abuse of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Principles: This Communication Policy applies to all written press releases, emails, communications, and letters to clergy and all other Church personnel, statements from the Bishop, and all other information on the Diocese's digital communication platforms. In all situations where any form of communication is to take place, regardless of whether it is through written or oral communication and regardless of choice of medium and recipient, it must be considered how the communication affects the alleged victim and the accused. The person authorized to respond to allegations, in each situation, must evaluate the impact and consequences of the communication(s). When handling information, the authorized person has a responsibility to ensure that they comply with all guided principles and procedures noted below.

The guiding principles for the Diocese of Laredo's communications are to:

- Communicate in an open, reliable, well-structured and transparent way, both internally and externally within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved, and without jeopardizing aspects of any criminal, legal investigation, or litigation.
- Disseminate all information timely and accurately.
- Fulfill legal requirements and comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations as it pertains to the sexual abuse allegations of minors.

The paramount purpose of the Diocese of Laredo's external and internal communications is to comply with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Through these steps and many others, we remain committed to the safety of our children and young people.

External and Internal Communication Procedures:

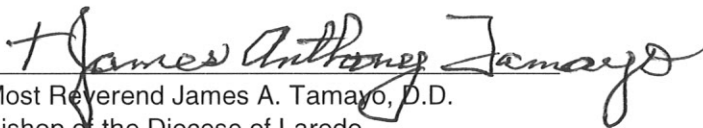
- A. When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith shall be notified.

- B. With the prior approval of the Bishop, the Director of Marketing and Communications or the Bishop's representative (if such person is assigned by the Bishop), will prepare and respond to requests for external and internal communications. No other Church employee will prepare and respond to requests for external and internal communication without prior approval from the Bishop.
- C. The Diocese's legal counsel, will review and provide recommendations for any external and internal communication prepared by the Director of Marketing and Communications or prepared by the Bishop's representative, that report on the criminal, legal investigation/litigation, prior to its release. Prior to release of any external or internal communications, due consideration must have taken into account the protection of the victim(s), and all others involved in the situation.

Legal Counsel will review and provide recommendation on the information included with all external and internal communication such as, by ways of example and not limitation, personal and sensitive information of the accused and victim, details on the sexual abuse claim, including action(s) taken by the Diocese of Laredo (e.g., report of allegations to civil and criminal authorities, assistance provided to the alleged victim and the accused, temporary removal of the accused from ministry pending an investigation into the allegation(s), measures taken to prohibit the accused from permanently exercising his/her ministry, or any ecclesiastical office or function pending the outcome of the process, etc.).

- D. The Bishop proceeds to review Legal Counsel's recommendation and, at all times, will have the executive power of governance, within the parameters of the universal law of the Church, to decide on the external and internal communication drafted and its time of release.
- E. If an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is substantiated, the Director of Marketing and Communications or the Bishop's representative (as assigned by the bishop) will distribute external and internal communications by:
 - Distributing a written statement to every parish in which the accused has served; encouraging people to come forward with relevant information.
 - Posting on the Church website.
 - Posting on the Diocese's digital communication platforms
- F. If an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been found unsubstantiated or unfounded every effort will be made to restore the good name of the person accused.

Communication Policy Approved By:


 Most Reverend James A. Tamayo, D.D.
 Bishop of the Diocese of Laredo

March 12, 2024
 Promulgation Date