**Module K – Background and Responses to Sexual Abuse of Minors**

**by Catholic Priests in the United States**

**(Primarily for Parishes)**

**Outline, Goals and Comments, Discussion Questions, References, and Sources**

**Outline**

1. Title Slides and Sources of Data (K-1 to K-3)
2. Timeframes and Historical Changes in Abuse (K-4 to K-10)
3. Seminary Formation (K-11)
4. Sexual Abuse and Civil Authorities (K-12 to K-13)
5. Reports and Response to Sexual Abuse (K-14 to K-15)
6. Development and Implementation of “The Five Principles” (K-16 to K-20)
7. Church and Seminary Responses (K-21 to K-25)
8. Some Key Findings (K-26 to K-28)
9. Discussion Questions (K-29)

**Goals and Comments**

The goal of Module K is to provide a brief introduction to understanding Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States. It is designed primarily for use in parishes, such as for parish and school staff, pastoral and finance councils, and parent groups. It begins with the methodology utilized by researchers as they gathered data for the studies authorized by the USCCB. It then considers the changes in abuse patterns, which show that more than 90 percent of abuse took place between 1960 and 1984, though most of it was reported in the year 2002 or later. A brief reference is made to seminary formation (a fuller explanation of the response of seminaries is provided in Module B). In Module K information is provided about when abuse was reported and by whom. Early along, in 1992, the bishops’ conference developed “The Five Principles” for dealing with abuse. These principles, designed to guide bishops in their handling of reports of clergy abuse, are listed. Module K also names some of the problems encountered in implementing the guidelines and in understanding the gravity and extent of abuse. It identifies as well church and seminary responses to sexual abuse. It concludes with a brief summary of key findings presented in the “Causes and Context” of abuse and then suggests some questions for discussion.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What reflections do you have about clerical sexual abuse in recent years?
2. How can the response by those who must be accountable for preventing sexual abuse in parishes be improved?
3. How can “The Five Principles” be used in parish settings to help parishioners better understand the guidelines described by the USCCB?
4. What more needs to be done to ensure continued progress in understanding and acting on the problem of clerical sexual abuse in parish settings?

**Titles of Slides and References**

K-1: Module K

K-2: Title Slide: Background and Responses to Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States

K-3: Main Sources of Data

K-4: Timeframes of First Abuse

K-5: Historical Changes in Abusers

K-6: The Rise and Fall of Abuse

Notes: For details, see Module “C,” especially slide C-26

K-7: National Patterns of Social Change

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 3

K-8: Distribution of Abuse – Incidence

K-9: Priests Who Have Allegations of Sexual Abuse against Them

Notes: For comparison of total numbers of diocesan and religious priests, see chart below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Total Priests | Diocesan Priests | Religious Priests |
| 1950\* | 42,970 | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1953 | 45,222 | 28,386 (62.8%) | 16,836 (37.2%) |
| 1960 | 53,796 | 32,569 (60.5%) | 21,227 (39.5%) |
| 1967 | 59,892 | 36,871 (61.6%) | 23,021 (38.4%) |
| 1970 | 59,192 | 37,272 (63.0%) | 21,920 (37.0%) |
| 1980 | 58,621 | 35,418 (60.4%) | 23,203 (39.6%) |
| 1985 | 57,317 | 35,052 (61.2%) | 22,265 (38.8%) |
| 1990 | 53,112 | 34,553 (65.1%) | 18,559 (34.9%) |
| 2000 | 46,405 | 30,940 (66.7%) | 15,465 (33.3%) |
| 2010 | 40,788 | 27,614 (67.7%) | 13,175 (32.3%) |

\*Numbers of diocesan and religious priests were not separately reported in 1950. *Nature and Scope*, p. 39

K-10: Decline in Incidence

K-11: Mainstream Seminary Training

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 46

K-12: Sexual Abuse and Civil Authorities

Notes: *Nature and Scope*, p. 39

K-13: National Patterns of Accusations: Extent of the Problem

Notes: *Causes and Context*, pp. 10, 27

Number of New Abuse Cases Occurring in the Designated Years

1985 – 1989 = 975

1990 – 2011 = 843\*

1,818 cases from 1985 to 2011

\**Breakdown of data from 1990 to 2011*

1990 – 1994 = 399

1995 – 1999 = 221

2000 – 2004 = 111

2005 – 2009 = 82

2010 – 2011 = 30

843 cases

Source: For years 1990 – 2009: Causes and Context, p. 10, Figure 1.3

For years 2010 – 2011: CARA 2011 Annual Survey of Allegations and Costs,

Appendices B and C

Data were not collected in 2003. A significant number of events were reported in 1993, and a notable increase took place in 2002.

K-14: Reports and Response, mid-1990s

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 78

K-15: Nature and Scope: Reports of Abuse, by Year Reported

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 9

K-16: Development of the Five Principles

Notes: *Causes and Context*, pp. 82, 84, 86

K-17: “Five Principles” Adopted by the Bishops’ Conference

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 4

K-18: Problems with the Implementation of the Five Principles, 1990-2002

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 4

K-19: Diocesan Practices Changed Slowly

K-20: Understanding of Sexual Abuse by Church Leaders

Note: The harm done by sexual abuse of even one person is not to be underestimated.

K-21: Church and Seminary Responses

K-22: Details of Other Responses by the Bishops’ Conference, 1: Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

Notes: The “Charter” was published with a lead title Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal. The booklet is divided into three parts, each of which is subdivided:

1. Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

a. To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors (Articles 1, 2, 3)

b. To Guarantee and Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors (Articles 4, 5, 6, 7)

c. To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures (Articles 8, 9, 10, 11)

d. To Protect the Faithful in the Future (Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)

e. Conclusion including four “Pledges”

2. Essential Norms for diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests and Deacons

a. Decree of Promulgation

b. Preamble

c. Norms – 13 in number, followed by Notes

3. A Statement of Episcopal Commitment [Appendix A]

a. Introduction

b. Four affirmations of commitment

K-23: Details of Other Responses by the Bishops’ Conference, 2: “Office of Child and Youth

Protection”

Notes: See 2010 Annual Report and Appendix

Each year since 2004, the Secretariat/Office of Child and Youth Protection has prepared an “Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter” for the National Review Board and the USCCB. The findings and recommendations are based on the information provided by the dioceses and eparchies. CARA staff members gather and analyze data from Dioceses, Eparchies, and Religious Institutes of priests. [2010 Annual Report]

Diocesan: In 2010, 425 new credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor were reported against a priest or deacon. The report lists three additional as a total number (428), but these are not included in the breakdown of numbers. [Appendix B]

Religious: In 2010, 75 new credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor were reported against a priest. The report lists two additional as a total number (77), but these are not included in the breakdown of numbers. [Appendix C]

NEW CREDIBLE ALLEGATIONS REPORTED IN 2010

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Years when abuse was alleged to have begun | Diocesan | Religious |
| Before 1975 | 224 | 39 |
| 1975 – 1999 | 156 | 34 |
| 2000 – 2010 | 17 | 0 |
| Year Unknown | 28  425 | 2  75 |

CREDIBLE ALLEGATIONS BY DECADE REPORTED IN 2010

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Diocesan | Religious |
| Before 1960 | 51 | 11 |
| 1960s | 109 | 17 |
| 1970s | 120 | 25 |
| 1980s | 85 | 17 |
| 1990s | 15 | 3 |
| 2000 – 2009 | 10 | 0 |
| 2010 | 7 | 0 |
| Year Unknown | 28  425 | 2  75 |

K-24: Details of Responses by the Bishops’ Conference, 3: National Review Board

K-25: Details of Responses by the Bishops’ Conference, 4: Diocesan Review Boards

K-26: Some Key Findings, 1

K-27: Some Key Findings, 2

K-28: Some Key Findings, 3

K-29: Discussion Questions

**Sources**

This module and others prepared for use in seminaries and schools of theology are based primarily on the two reports presented to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops by the John Jay College Research Team, The City University of New York: *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States*, 1950-2010, March, 2011 and *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950-2002*, February 2004.

**Prepared by:**

Sister Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, University of St. Thomas

Technical Associate: Catherine Slight

Consultants: Dr. Karen Terry and Margaret Smith, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, authors of the major studies on sexual abuse for the USCCB and Dr. Mary Gautier, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate