



Diocese of Winona-Rochester Communications Policy

Revised October 12, 2018

Mission:

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Winona is committed to practice a communications policy of "transparency and openness" in accordance with and true to the spirit of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Article Seven.

In this context, "transparency and openness" refers to a willingness to share information unless there is a serious reason to maintain confidentiality. Possible infringement upon the rights of an alleged abuser or victim will be given careful consideration. Matters under litigation, unsubstantiated allegations, and requests by victims for anonymity and/or confidentiality will all be given careful consideration as possible exemptions to our pledge of transparency. ¹

Responding to the Media:

The Director of Communications will be responsible for the coordination of all contact with the media. All media inquiries, requests for interviews or information made to the diocesan bishop, diocesan personnel, review board members, victims' assistance aides, priests, parishes, schools, etc. will be coordinated with and responded to in consultation with the Office of Communications. The Director of Communications will consult with, guide and coordinate relevant persons in the handling of media inquiries.

The Diocesan Office of Communications will strive for the highest professional standards in providing the public, the faithful, and the media with the timely and forthright dissemination of information. All media requests for reactions or interviews will be handled with diligence and a respect for deadlines.

It will be our duty to exercise great care to respect and protect the reputations, privacy, dignity, and rights of all concerned, be they victim or accused, in all conversations and contacts with the public and media.

Promotion of Policies/Prevention/Victim Aid:

The Office of Communications will assist all diocesan departments whenever possible toward the fulfillment of their missions to prevent child abuse through education, vigilance, and the creation of safe environment programs. Efforts will be made to publicize the diocesan policy: Assistance Ministry, the Sexual Misconduct Manual; the diocesan Code of Conduct; the *USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*; to encourage the reporting of abuses, and to inform faithful of the availability of diocesan counseling and healing services for victims of abuse.

Promotion/Publicity efforts shall be disseminated through such outlets as:

1. The Courier (diocesan monthly newspaper).
2. Broadcast television stations in the diocese that air the Televised Mass.
3. The Diocesan web site at: www.dow.org, features materials for general information on reporting sexual abuse.
4. Parish bulletins. Information will be distributed to all parishes for reprinting in their weekly bulletins, which will also direct them to the diocesan web site for full information.
5. Homilies and Letters to the Faithful may also be utilized for important matters of communication.
6. Information, announcements and press releases will be furnished to secular media when appropriate.
7. Every effort will be made to keep the Faithful and the Catholic Community informed through the sharing of all relevant news releases and statements with parishes, priests, deacons, diocesan employees, schools, etc.
8. Remedial efforts should be taken to restore the reputation and good name of persons cleared of false allegations/accusations. Such measures might include facilitation of secular media interviews and feature stories, special coverage by The Courier, secular newspapers via press release, and Letters to the Faithful from the bishop to be read at all Masses.
9. We shall remain open to revisions and additions to this Policy of Communications should the need become apparent.

Revised 10/12/2018

¹*Adapted from USCCB Communications Policy Communiqué*