

## The Office of Assistance

**Ministry** strives to provide outreach within a climate of compassion, acceptance, privacy and respect. The primary objective of the Office is to promote healing for all those affected by the sexually abusive behavior of clergy and church personnel.

... a permanent commitment on the part of this local church, the Archdiocese of Chicago, to continue and to intensify the efforts to reach in a healing way those victims who want to survive.

– Francis Cardinal George, OMI  
Archbishop of Chicago 1997–2014

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



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### Who We Are

The Office of Assistance Ministry strives to provide pastoral care, support and resources to victim-survivors of clerical sexual abuse and their loved ones in their efforts to achieve psychological, emotional and spiritual healing.

### Contact Us

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ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



**Office for the Protection of  
Children and Youth**

# Assistance Ministry

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**The first obligation of the Church  
with regards to the Victims is  
healing and reconciliation.**

**Charter for the Protection of Children &  
Young People  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**



## HISTORY

The Office of Assistance Ministry was first established in 1992 in response to reports of sexual abuse of minors by Archdiocesan clergy. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin was instrumental in establishing the Office of Assistance Ministry following the recommendations of the first-ever Cardinal's Commission on Clerical Misconduct. Francis Cardinal George, OMI, carried on with his own commitment and support of this important ministry. Blase Cardinal Cupich continues with leadership that reinforces the Church's commitment to outreach and healing.

Over the years, the Office of Assistance Ministry staff has accompanied many victim-survivors of clerical sexual abuse on their healing journeys.

## OUTREACH

The Office of Assistance Ministry and its professional staff recognize that for many victim-survivors it is difficult to imagine finding the courage to let officials of the Catholic Church know that they were sexually abused by a priest or by church personnel. Therefore, after a formal allegation is made, the Office offers a variety of services to assist victim-survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones in their effort to achieve psychological, emotional and spiritual healing.

Some of these services include counseling, spiritual direction, support groups and other social services agreed upon by the victim and the Office of Assistance Ministry. Since its creation as one of the first victim assistance ministries in the United States, it has provided services and support to over 400 victim-survivors and their family members.

## COUNSELING

The purpose of the treatment is to create a safe relationship where the victim-survivor can work with the professional to lessen unwanted emotional and destructive impulses; and work toward improving their ability to cope with their life today.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

The victim-survivor led groups for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse aim to provide victims-survivors opportunities to connect with others who are also on a road towards healing.

## FAMILY SUPPORT

The Office of Assistance Ministry recognizes that childhood sexual abuse impacts the family too. Services are provided to family members.

## SPIRITUALITY

For many victim-survivors, the sexual abuse affected/ruined their spiritual life. However, many victim-survivors continue to seek spiritual meaning and direction in their lives. The office maintains a list of qualified spiritual directors who are available to help victim-survivors to grieve their spiritual losses as they re-examine its role in their life today.

## PRAYER AND REFLECTION

With the Hope & Healing Committee, comprised of victim-survivors, clergy and personnel from the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth, the Office of Assistance Ministry coordinates efforts for an annual Healing Mass, where victim-survivors, family members and all in the Catholic community to gather in solidarity to pray for healing.

## MEETING WITH ARCHDIOCESAN LEADERSHIP

At the appropriate time in a victim-survivor's healing, the office can arrange a private meeting with the cardinal. This affords the victim-survivor the chance to share his or her story while providing the cardinal an opportunity to listen emphatically. The intended purpose of this meeting is to offer some emotional and spiritual healing.



## HEALING GARDEN

The Office of Assistance Ministry invites all victim-survivors and their families to the Healing Garden. It was created by a committee of victim-survivors, diocesan priests and staff from the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth and approved by Francis Cardinal George, OMI.

It is intended to be a place that invites reconciliation, hope, and healing, not only for the victim-survivors and their families, but also for the larger family of the Catholic Church.