

California Catholic Dioceses Announce New Compensation Program for Child Abuse Victims

LOS ANGELES, September 16, 2019 — Starting today, individuals who were abused as minors by diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and the Dioceses of Fresno, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino and San Diego (the “Participating Dioceses”), may begin the process for filing claims with the California Independent Compensation Program (ICP).

Individuals who have previously notified the Dioceses of allegations of abuse will be sent ICP Claim packets; individuals who have not previously notified the Dioceses of allegations of abuse will be able to register with the program for an initial eligibility review. Eligible victims may file claims, regardless of when the abuse might have occurred.

The ICP is independent from Church control. **Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros**, nationally known compensation program administrators, have been working with the California Bishops since last November to design the program.

The program will be overseen by an Independent Oversight Committee (IOC) consisting of former Secretary of Defense **Leon Panetta**, former California Governor **Gray Davis**, and business leader and former Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, **Maria Contreras-Sweet**.

Secretary Panetta said, “This important program is a necessary response to historic claims of child sexual abuse in the participating dioceses. Today, it is required that every new claim of abuse must be reported to law enforcement which will lead to the prosecution of those who have abused children. Although the ICP will zealously protect the privacy of any confidential information voluntarily provided by victims to the administrators, victims are free to discuss their history of abuse and their experience with this program. The administrators and IOC will periodically issue reports regarding the number of claims filed with the program and the amount of compensation provided to those victims. The purpose of the IOC is to oversee the effectiveness of the program and ensure that it is administered entirely independent of the Church. Our goal is to make sure that the public can have faith in the fairness and integrity of the ICP.”

Feinberg and Biros are administering similar compensation programs for child victims of abuse covering Catholic dioceses in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Colorado.

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Independent Compensation Program

The six Participating Dioceses comprise more than 10 million Catholics, about 80 percent of the state's Catholic population.

Governor Gray Davis said: "As California's Governor, I signed legislation giving victims of child sexual abuse more time to file legal claims. That legislation also revived claims that were previously barred by the statute of limitations. Victim-survivors of sexual abuse have already endured tremendous pain. For some, facing that anguish again in a public trial is a burden too heavy to shoulder. That is why I support this voluntary, private, and non-adversarial Independent Compensation Program as an alternative, regardless of when the abuse occurred."

The ICP website can be found at www.CaliforniaDiocesesICP.com. The final Protocol and Frequently Asked Questions are available on the website.

This new program is voluntary. Child victim-survivors can elect to enter this program as an alternative to pursuing their claims against the Church in court.

Feinberg and Biros will have complete independence to determine the eligibility of individual claims and they alone will determine the amount of compensation offered to any victim. The Dioceses have agreed to abide by Feinberg and Biros' decisions and the compensation determinations are not subject to appeal by the victim or the Dioceses.

The six Participating Dioceses will be contacting victims who have previously reported allegations of abuse to alert them to this new program. In addition, the program will invite others who may have been abused as minors, but have not previously reported the abuse, to come forward and register with the program.

This new program is open to a broader range of persons than are eligible to pursue claims in civil courts. Those minors harmed many years ago and barred from filing lawsuits because of civil statutes of limitations will be eligible to make claims under this new program. Also, because this program has no proof-of-citizenship requirement, undocumented persons who may have been abused as minors are also eligible to make claims.

Maria Contreras-Sweet said: "As a Catholic mother and long-time voice for the unheard, I take on this role with a deep sense of responsibility to assure the process is independent, compassionate and provides the abuse survivors and their families a meaningful step towards healing. There is nothing more precious than the lives of God's innocent children. Their protection is our obligation. My hope is that this program, coupled with the other preventative initiatives the Church is taking, will bring about real change and a renewed confidence in our Catholic faith."

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Unlike civil litigation in the courts, this new program provides a process that is non-adversarial and protects victims' privacy. Victim-survivors do not need to retain a lawyer to participate and there are no fees for participating. Compensation for fully completed and documented claims can usually be paid within 90 – 120 days.

Kenneth Feinberg said: “No amount of money will provide closure to victims. But the program is a small step in helping victims secure some degree of financial security. A claimant who for years, decades, may have been ignored, now has a program where that claim will be acknowledged and validated. Do not underestimate the importance of this.”

Secretary Panetta “encourages everyone to carefully read the attached ICP documents. They contain a clear commitment by the Administrators and the Independent Oversight Committee to provide victims/survivors with a dignified, confidential process to seek reconciliation and reparation for the suffering they have endured as a result of unspeakable crimes. We hope that everyone who has suffered will participate in the program. We can never erase the pain you have endured, but we can assist you in the ongoing process of healing and recovery. Our prayer is that this process can help provide some semblance of justice to the victims of crimes that for too long went unpunished.”

Program Highlights:

- On September 16, 2019, the California Independent Compensation Program (“ICP”) will be implemented and will begin the process of distributing program materials and claim forms to individuals who were sexually abused as a minor by diocesan priests in the following California Dioceses: Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and the Dioceses of Fresno, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino and San Diego (the “Participating Dioceses”);
- The Participating Dioceses serve 80% of California’s Catholic population. The Participating Dioceses will fund all compensation offers made by the ICP Administrators, but otherwise have no say in the amount of compensation offered to any victim, or in the operation or administration of the ICP. The ICP is entirely independent of Church control;
- Nationally known Administrators **Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros** designed and will administer the ICP. An Independent Oversight Committee consisting of former Secretary of Defense **Leon Panetta**, former Governor **Gray Davis** and business leader and former Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, **Maria Contreras-Sweet** will oversee the implementation and administration of the ICP;

- Effective September 16, 2019, victim-survivors who were minors when abused, including undocumented immigrants, can begin the process to apply for compensation for such past abuse, regardless of when that abuse occurred; and,
- Fully completed claims are usually determined within 90 days of a victim-survivor filing a claim.

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Attachments:

Protocol for the California Independent Compensation Program
Frequently Asked Questions