



## REPORTING A SIGNIFICANT UNEXPECTED EVENT OR SERIOUS INCIDENT

### **POLICY**

Timely reporting to Archdiocesan leadership of any significant unexpected event or serious incident provides support to the reporting entity that all appropriate steps are taken to assure compliance with public safety or other regulatory agencies, adequate and timely reporting for insurance purposes, as well as with the policies of the Archdiocese of Miami. Timely reporting also facilitates and coordinates the support of the Archdiocesan Office of Communications for the appropriate management of information distributed to the public, through the secular media.

This policy is applicable to **all** Archdiocesan Entities, and all Archdiocesan Personnel. It supplements and expands already existing reporting obligations under the Archdiocesan Policy: Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment for Children and Vulnerable Adults.

### **I. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

***Archdiocesan Entity*** includes the Pastoral Center, all parishes, schools, day care or early childhood centers, Catholic Charities, Catholic Legal Services, Catholic Health Services and all its affiliated entities, St. Thomas University, Radio Paz, MorningStar Retreat Center and other entities sponsored by or affiliates of the Archdiocese of Miami.

***Archdiocesan Personnel*** includes clergy, religious brothers and sisters, lay employees, volunteers and independent contractors of any Archdiocesan Entity.

### **II. TIMELY REPORTING OF A SIGNIFICANT UNEXPECTED EVENT OR SERIOUS INCIDENT**

When a significant unexpected event or serious incident occurs at an Archdiocesan entity, the event or incident must be communicated to the appropriate authority(s) at the Archdiocesan entity (principal, pastor, administrator or director), as well as the appropriate authority at the Pastoral Center, **immediately** (as quickly as possible without jeopardizing safety of persons or property) upon occurrence or upon learning of the event's or incident's occurrence. In cases of alleged child sexual abuse, Florida law requires that Florida's Department of Children and Families be notified. Please see the Archdiocesan Policy: Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment for Children and Vulnerable Adults.

Such events or incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- natural disasters;
- incidents with serious injury or death;
- law enforcement, firefighter or emergency medical personnel called to respond to serious incident at the Archdiocesan entity;
- serious misconduct by a student or Archdiocesan personnel requiring reporting to DCF or other regulatory agency;
- allegations of wrongdoing, illegal acts, or inappropriate conduct;
- school lockdowns;
- incidents likely to receive media attention or inquiries, regardless of the apparent seriousness;
- threats to persons or the entity; or



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- incidents requiring reporting to Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Education (DOE), Department of Professional Regulation (DPR), Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) or other regulatory agencies

The appropriate person(s) at the Pastoral Center to be notified includes one or more of the following:

- Chancellor for Administration/COO (any and all issues)
- Chancellor for Canonical Affairs (issues related to priests)
- Superintendent of Schools (issues related to schools, Religious Education programs)
- Archdiocesan Director of Communications (issues that may receive media attention or inquiries or require communication to internal or external public)
- Victim Assistance Coordinator (issues related to child sexual abuse)
- Chief Financial Officer (issues related to finance, buildings or insurance)
- Senior Director of Human Resources (issues related to personnel), or
- Other department heads as appropriate, depending upon the unexpected or significant event or serious incident.

In a situation where DCF, law enforcement, firefighter notification or emergency medical personnel is required, the notification of public safety agency(ies) is immediate and should never be delayed by waiting to notify Pastoral Center leadership -- unless assistance is needed to determine if the event is a reportable one. Following the notification to the appropriate public safety agency(ies), appropriate Pastoral Center leadership must be notified immediately.

Entity leadership should report significant unexpected events or serious incidents to the Pastoral Center leadership who can most effectively assist them in dealing with the situation (for example, schools report to Office of Schools). At the same time, reporting of the incidents should never be delayed because an individual is unavailable or an office closed. Cell telephone numbers are provided in this policy to contact Pastoral Center leadership outside of business hours when the usual route of reporting may not be immediately possible.

**Catholic Charities** entities and programs follow Catholic Charities policy which requires incident reporting on-line via Risk Management database. Completion of a report generates an e-mail to the CEO. Catholic Charities Policy: *Media Relations* requires notice to the CEO related to any inquiry of the media. Catholic Charities CEO is responsible for communication with Pastoral Center leadership as required by this policy.

**Catholic Health Services** entities and programs follow Catholic Health Services' *Crisis Management Communications Policy* and *Reporting and Media Management of Serious Clinical and Other Adverse Events*. CHS senior leadership is responsible for communication with Pastoral Center leadership as required by this policy.

**St. Thomas University** follows its *Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan*. St. Thomas University senior leadership is responsible for communication with Pastoral Center leadership as required by this policy.

It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Center leader receiving the incident reporting (identified above) to notify the Chancellor for Administration and other Pastoral Center offices as needed, immediately, if the notification has not been made directly by the reporting entity. The Archbishop, and Director of Communications, if not already notified, will be informed by the Chancellor for Administration, as



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needed. If the situation requires it, the Archdiocesan Attorney will be notified. Following notice to the appropriate Pastoral Center leadership other appropriate internal communications at the entity may begin, such as parent phone calling, information released to entity staff as appropriate, etc. All communication with media should be managed as outlined in the next section of this Policy.

The appropriate person from Pastoral Center leadership will remain in contact with the entity where the incident occurred to provide direction and support and facilitate communication as needed. This individual is responsible to assure that appropriate guidance in managing the event is offered to the entity and that written documentation is provided to the Pastoral Center as the situation might warrant.

### III. SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO BE REPORTED

When contacting the Pastoral Center leadership please be prepared to provide the following information, to the extent it is available. Do not delay contact in order to obtain all information listed below, if not readily available.

1. Entity name;
2. Contact person reporting with contact information, preferably cell phone number;
3. Details of event or incident including status report on severity of injuries;
4. Regulatory agencies who have been, or will be, contacted (police, fire, DCF, DPR, AHCA, etc);
5. Plan for managing the outcome of the event or incident, if needed; and
6. Any media inquiries received.

### IV. CONTACT INFORMATION

1. **Initial communication should be by telephone** if at all possible; e-mail is suitable for follow-up communication.
2. If the person desired is not immediately available, contact the Chancellor for Administration or the Director of Communications, in that order. Weekends and evenings, contact the Chancellor for Administration or Director of Communications by telephone and send an e-mail to other Pastoral Center leadership as needed.
3. The cell phone number of the School Superintendent has been provided directly to schools to use as their first point of contact. If not available, use the contact information below.

Chancellor for Administration/COO	305.762.1284	CELL PHONE	305.450.6420
		<a href="mailto:eworley@theadom.org">eworley@theadom.org</a>	
Chancellor for Canonical Affairs	305.762.1262	<a href="mailto:dzielonka@theadom.org">dzielonka@theadom.org</a>	
Victim Assistance Coordinator	1.866.802.2873		
Director of Communications	305.762.1043	CELL PHONE	305.790.8811
		<a href="mailto:mragosta@theadom.org">mragosta@theadom.org</a>	
Superintendent of Schools	305.762.1078	<a href="mailto:jrigg@theadom.org">jrigg@theadom.org</a>	
Chief Financial Officer	305.762.1242	<a href="mailto:mcasciato@theadom.org">mcasciato@theadom.org</a>	
Senior Director of HR	305.762.1201	<a href="mailto:lpinto@theadom.org">lpinto@theadom.org</a>	
Senior Director, Building and Property	305.762.1033	CELL PHONE	305.951.4058
		<a href="mailto:dprada@theadom.org">dprada@theadom.org</a>	
Pastoral Center - Switchboard	305.757.6241		



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4. Catholic Charities as per its *Media Relations Policy* and its *Risk Management reporting system*
5. St. Thomas University as per its *Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan*.
  
6. Catholic Health Services as per its *Crisis Management Communications Policy and Reporting and Media Management of Serious Clinical and Other Adverse Events*.

### V. COMMUNICATION TO THE MEDIA (RELATED TO CHS, CC, STU)

It is the responsibility of the Communications Offices of Catholic Health Services, Catholic Charities and St. Thomas University to communicate with the media with respect to their ministry. In addition, the Communications Office is responsible to provide updates on communication with the media to the Archdiocesan Office of Communications in a timely manner, and if necessitated by the circumstances to coordinate communication with media with the Archdiocese.

### VI. COMMUNICATION TO THE MEDIA (RELATED TO THE ARCHDIOCESE, PARISHES, AND SCHOOLS)

It is important to present the Archdiocese's position accurately. When information is released, every effort must be made to avoid misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or confusion. Once a misconception takes root, it is always difficult and often impossible to make a full correction.

Any external communication from an Archdiocesan Entity regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be approved by the Director of Communications, and is reviewed with the Chancellor for Administration before information is released; written communication is prepared in collaboration with the appropriate leadership of the entity and the Archdiocesan Office of Communications. This includes any letters to parents, boards of directors, individual summaries distributed to staff or faculty, etc.

In the interest of timely communication to required regulatory agencies and Archdiocesan leadership and orderly, consistent management of information released to the news media and the general community, this policy and procedures is required for all Archdiocesan entities.

#### Secular Media Interviews

1. **Archdiocesan Personnel** are to report all media calls to the Office of Communications immediately. No comments will be made to the press/media before reporting the contact to the Office of Communications. Provide the reporter's name, media outlet and telephone number, inquire about the reporter's deadline, the subject of the story and tell him/her that a representative of the Office of Communications will return the call promptly. Or, suggest the reporter call the Office of Communications directly.

If a phone call message is received, record the message (from voice mail) and refer the voice mail information immediately to the Office of Communications. It is critical that all media calls be addressed on the same day they were received, if at all possible.

2. **Archdiocesan Personnel** will not respond to inquiries from the news media concerning matters such as personnel issues, crisis management, insurance, emergency situations, and Archdiocesan policies and fiscal operations; instead, they must immediately refer such inquiries to their immediate supervisor and the Director of Communications.



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3. **Archdiocesan Personnel** will contact their supervisor and Director of Communications regarding “breaking news.” A strategy will be prepared and communicated. The Archbishop’s office will participate in this strategic planning, as well as the Archdiocesan Attorney, if appropriate.
4. **All Archdiocesan Entities are private property.** The secular media (print or broadcast) is not allowed on any **Archdiocesan Entity** property without express permission from the head of the entity in coordination with the Director of Communications.
5. In a crisis situation, the Office of Communications will be briefed by the Chancellor of Administration as information is released from the Archdiocesan entity. However, if the Director of Communications is first to receive the information, the Director will notify the Chancellor of Administration. The Director of Communications will work in collaboration with the Chancellor’s office, the pastor or administrator of the entity and other appropriate persons to develop a response for internal and/or external communication.
6. For communications purposes, a crisis is defined as any emergency or controversy that could negatively or significantly impact parishioners, personnel or parents of students, the public perception’s or reputation of the Archdiocese. Emergencies include, but are not limited to, fires, serious accidents, explosions, tornadoes and other weather-related incidents, and natural disasters. Controversies include crimes or threats against Archdiocesan Personnel or property, suicides, misconduct by clergy or religious, Archdiocesan staff, volunteers or students, allegations of fiscal irregularities, personnel issues, or terrorism or other such implied threats.

### Reference:

Archdiocesan Policy: *Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment for Children and Vulnerable Adults*

Catholic Health Services Policies: *Crisis Management Communications and Reporting and Media Management of Serious Clinical and Other Adverse Events.*

Catholic Charities Policy: *Media Relations and its Risk Management reporting system*

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