

MOVING FORWARD

Concrete Steps to Hold Bishops Accountable

1. What happened in Baltimore?

The USCCB voted on several proposals to hold bishops accountable for instances of sexual abuse of children or vulnerable persons, sexual misconduct, or the intentional mishandling of such cases. We specifically committed to involving and utilizing lay professional experts. We also established a new, independent mechanism for the reporting of such cases.

2. Isn't the "Metropolitan Model" just bishops policing bishops?

While we have seen Metropolitan investigations achieve success in uncovering, publicizing and punishing bishop misconduct multiple times in the past year, the body of bishops agreed in Baltimore that independent lay oversight is crucial. The combination of lay involvement, Metropolitan leadership and the final judgment of the Holy See will ensure that complaints are evaluated thoroughly, and justice is achieved for victims and survivors.

3. How exactly will the laity be involved?

We're building upon the well-established practice of lay expertise in the Church, starting at the very beginning of this process. Laypeople will assist us in informing the public about how to utilize our new reporting mechanism. A lay person will be informed any time a complaint comes through that process. Lay investigators will be identified at the provincial level by Metropolitan Archbishops and will play an active role in investigating individual complaints against bishops.

4. Is this process transparent? What will the public know about credible complaints against individual bishops?

Pope Francis's *Motu Proprio* includes whistleblower protections that will allow anyone making a complaint to publicize it however they wish. The new *Directives* require those making a complaint to be given documents describing the process. As noted, the bishops are also committed to lay involvement in both the receiving of complaints against bishops and in any investigations. With these safeguards, the bishops are committed to making the process as transparent as they possibly can.

5. Level with me: Will the policies approved in Baltimore protect people from abuse at the hands of bishops?

We've achieved a goal stated by USCCB President Cardinal DiNardo throughout the process: We've filled the gaps in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and now build upon its success. The Holy Father's *Motu Proprio*, the new *Directives*, the renewed *Episcopal Commitments*, the third-party reporting system, and the heavy emphasis and reliance on lay expertise in the United States will bring unprecedented accountability throughout the hierarchy of the American Church.

