



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

October 7, 2019

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

Following our promise from earlier this year, the four Bishops of Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo are announcing today the opening of a reparations program for child abuse victims.

Starting today, individuals who were sexually abused as minors by diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Denver and the Dioceses of Pueblo and Colorado Springs may begin the process for filing claims with the Colorado Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program (CIRRP).

Individuals who have previously notified the Dioceses of allegations of abuse will be sent CIRRP 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 survivors may file claims, regardless of when the abuse might have occurred.

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

The program will be overseen by an Independent Oversight Committee (IOC) consisting of:

- **Hank Brown**, former United States Senator, Chairman of the Committee
- **Jeanne Smith**, former elected District Attorney for the Fourth Judicial District of Colorado
- **Laura Morales**, First Bank
- **David Crockenberg**, former judge who presided in the District Court of the Tenth Judicial District in Pueblo
- **Nancy Feldman**, Victim's Advocate

Feinberg and Biros are administering similar compensation programs for Catholic dioceses in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and California.

I urge you to learn more about this important program by visiting the CIRRP's website:

www.ColoradoDiocesesIRRP.com

The new program is voluntary. 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 survivor. The Dioceses have agreed to abide by Feinberg and Biros' decisions and the compensation determinations are not subject to appeal by the survivor or the Dioceses.

Unlike civil litigation in the courts, this new program provides a process that is non-adversarial and protects victims' privacy if they desire to remain anonymous. However, there are no restrictions if the survivor wishes to speak publicly about their abuse and participation in the program. 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.

Reparation amounts provided to survivors are at the sole discretions of those administering claims for the CIRRP. Initial funding for this program will be provided by existing Archdiocesan assets. While the number of potential claims is currently unknown, it is important to note that the Archdiocese will not fund the CIRRP using any money given to donor-designated funds, donations made to parishes, ministries or schools.

We have been providing pastoral care and financial support for survivors here in the Archdiocese for many years. We will continue to do so. But we also understand that some survivors are reluctant to come to the Church for assistance. Our hope with this new program is to give those who prefer to participate in an independent program a chance to seek redress and healing.

Since 1991, the Archdiocese of Denver has put in place strict policies and programs to protect young people and to create safe environments in parishes, schools and other ministries. Tens of thousands of adults throughout the state have been trained in abuse prevention and reporting. Those in leadership positions have undergone background checks. Dioceses have implemented strict reporting requirements, working closely with local law enforcement officials to immediately report abuse allegations and remove accused individuals from ministry.

As a result, new cases of sexual misconduct by priests involving minors are rare today in the Catholic Church in Colorado. Nonetheless, the Bishops undertake this program in their continued efforts to provide avenues for survivors of abuse to receive assistance to continue their healing.

The damage done to innocent young people and their families by sexual abuse in the past is profound. I realize, as you do, that no program, however well-intentioned and well-designed, can fully repair the damage done to victims and their families. But I pray that this new program might provide another avenue toward healing and hope.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samuel J. Aquila". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.
Archbishop of Denver