



## OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

### Diocesan Review Board: Criteria for Assessing Sexual Abuse Allegations

In advising the Bishop, the Review Board must assess whether the available evidence meets the criteria for a credible allegation.

#### **Credible and substantiated**

***Credible:*** an allegation of sexual abuse is one that is not manifestly false or frivolous.

***Substantiated:*** an allegation is one in which there is enough evidence to establish reasonable grounds to believe that the identified cleric committed the alleged abuse. It does not imply a presumption of guilt.

***Credible and substantiated:*** the preponderance of the evidence supports the allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. This decision is after carefully considering many factors and circumstances that tend to support the allegation.

Determining the outcome of a sexual abuse allegation is challenging, as these incidents often take place without witnesses. The facts and circumstances that could support a credible allegation vary depending on the case.

- The reported incident constitutes sexual abuse.
- The individual involved was a minor at the time.
- Sufficient information exists to conclude that a specific act(s) occurred as opposed to a sense by the accuser that something could have, might have, or possibly did occur.
- The alleged perpetrator was alive and at the proposed assignment at the time of the alleged incident occurred.
- The accused cleric either admits or does not deny the reported incident(s), even if he does not classify it as “abusive.”
- After an investigation by a trained investigator, the preponderance of evidence leads to the conclusion that the incident(s) likely occurred.
- An accusation against a deceased cleric includes a sufficient description of a known pattern of behavior from other allegations.

#### **Not credible**

After reviewing the evidence, it is concluded that the allegation could not have occurred.

#### **Unsubstantiated**

An allegation lacks sufficient evidence to establish the probability that the accused cleric has committed an offense of sexual abuse of a minor.

#### **Credible and unsubstantiated**

***Credible:*** an allegation of sexual abuse is one that is not manifestly false or frivolous.

***Unsubstantiated:*** an allegation lacks sufficient evidence to establish the probability that the accused cleric has committed an offense of sexual abuse of a minor.