

Hope and Healing: Best Principles in Victims Assistance Ministry

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Best
practices are
derived from
best
principles...

- Seek input from victim-survivors, from those who love, and live with, victim-survivors, and from those who work with victim-survivors
- This presentation incorporates input from all those important sources of lived experience
- We honor the experience of victim-survivors by learning from them but it should not be their burden to teach us



It begins with listening...

"I honestly didn't expect anyone to respond to me."

- Victim-survivors often feel as if they live in the shadows – listening brings them into the light
- Respond to everyone
- Dedicate time to listen to victim-survivors, unfiltered
- Honor the sacred story of each victim-survivor
- Listen for understanding, then put that understanding into action
- Sustain the dialogue
- Diversify the voices listened to...



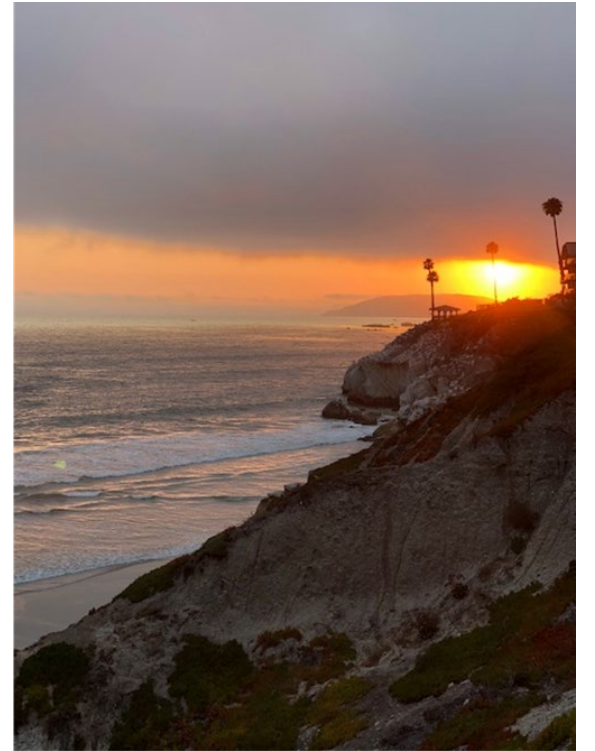
Betrayed/ Believed

- Abuse by clergy is a betrayal trauma, effects of which are compounded secrecy, denial and cover-up
- Begin by believing -- acknowledge the of the victim-survivor
- Apologize
- Advise victim-survivors of their right to law enforcement, then re-report
- Offer counseling and support right away
- Remove accused priests from ministry, right away, pending the outcome of an investigation
- Announce allegations to all who could be this is transparency in action
- Demonstrate trustworthiness, again and again



Silenced/ Heard

- Put what you've heard into action
- Demonstrate your understanding
- Post the names of credibly or plausibly accused, and keep posting – this is transparency
- Be accessible to victim-survivors and to your Victims Assistance Coordinator
- Pray for victim-survivors at every mass
- Talk about what you've learned in your homilies
- Diversify the voices privileged in the dialogue
- Communicate – what you're learning and understanding, what you're doing, what you expect



Isolated/ Accompanied

- Be victim-centric – pray for victims first
- Journey with victim-survivors
- Apology meetings
- Healing liturgies, liturgy of lament and repentance
- Sacred spaces and places
- Acknowledgement in writing, in prayer intentions, in homilies, in diocesan publications
- Foster a culture of outreach and support – the impact of a betrayal trauma is significant – that isn't resolved quickly or easily – various forms of ongoing support and care may be necessary to effect healing



Complacency/ Vigilance

- Maintain the highest standards as to safe environment practices, screenings for seminarians and suitability verification
- Hold clergy accountable for the implementation of safe environment practices and reporting responsibilities – mandatory parish audits and removal of clergy who fail to implement mandated policies or who fail to appropriately report clergy misconduct
- Model commitment to, and affirm the value of, these practices – the numbers don't lie – bring in experts to talk with clergy about how to minister to victim-survivors – support continuing education beyond mandatory trainings
- Change culture and set the tone for accountability and transparency in ACTION
- It takes a TEAM -- VAM, Vicars for Clergy, Legal, Communications, independent investigators, safe environment, pastors, lay staff...



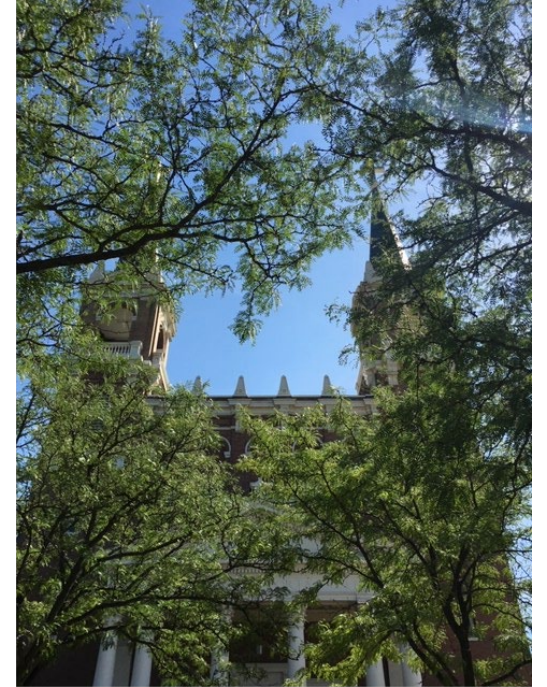
Extend and engage

- Each person will need something different, and each will teach you something you need to understand
- Flexibility and openness to what the victim-survivor needs is crucial
- Review both minor and adult allegations at the review board
- Liaison with law enforcement and child protective services



Change church culture

- Apply standards and expectations to Bishops
- Affirm abuse and its cover-up will not be tolerated by actions taken
- Engage professional lay people at the highest levels of decision-making
- Break the silence
- Distribute outreach materials widely and in different languages
- Be mindful of underserved communities; cultural sensitivity
- Foster collaboration within and across dioceses
 - California VACs monthly call
 - OCYP Resource Toolbox
 - ADLA Archdiocesan Handbook online (including policies regarding clergy)



Joe

- “There are too many people like me out there that need help. I’m proud of you for addressing the vital issues to the Bishops. Tell them my story and that I have begun to live again after 48 years. There is HOPE!!! “
- “The impact you have compounds with each heart you mend.”

