

Report: KC diocese put children in jeopardy

by [Daniel Burke](#)

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(RNS) The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph could have put children in jeopardy when it failed to follow guidelines for reporting clergy sexual abuse, according to a report commissioned by the Missouri-based diocese.

The internal investigation, led by a former U.S. attorney, came after the Rev. Shawn Ratigan was arrested for possessing child pornography last May.

A Catholic school principal alerted Bishop Robert Finn to child-abuse concerns about Ratigan in May 2010, but diocesan officials failed to prevent the priest from having contact with children, according to the 141-page report.

Diocesan officials also failed to inform the police, or an independent review board that church guidelines suggest should receive all accusations to help determine credibility, according to the report. "Individuals in positions of authority reacted to events in ways that could have jeopardized the safety of children in diocesan parishes, schools, and families," the report states.

The report recommends that any diocesan employee or volunteer who receives information about sexual abuse by clergy inform police and state officials. The independent review board should also be notified of all accusations, the report states.

Finn called the recommendations "comprehensive, thoughtful and detailed."

"We understand their importance and are focusing on them so we establish clear, strong and unequivocal procedures for all diocesan personnel and volunteers that ensure the safety of our children today and into the future," he said.

The nation's Catholic bishops were criticized for not amending their sexual abuse policies at a semiannual meeting in June, even after high-profile cases in Kansas City and Philadelphia raised questions about the policies' effectiveness.