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UNH Professor Says Recommendations to Protect Children from Abuse Supported by Cardinal Law

By [Erika Mantz](#)
UNH News Bureau
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Writers can reach David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, at (603) 862-2761.

DURHAM, N.H. , David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire and a member of the commission appointed by Cardinal Bernard Law to recommend ways to protect children from abuse, says that he is "cautiously optimistic" the commission's recommendations will be implemented.

"The cardinal did not seem to have any major problems with our ideas, but the church is a conservative and slow-moving organization, and they are being pushed to make a lot of changes at the same time," Finkelhor says. "It probably will take longer than most of us would like."

Nonetheless, he noted that the archdiocese appears to be moving ahead on some fronts, such as in its effort to set up parish level child abuse prevention teams and get educational curricula to children.

The commission, in its 52-page report, called for the creation of a registry of clergy and church staff who have been removed after credible allegations of abuse, which could be checked by employers or other organizations. It also calls for a requirement that any allegation of abuse be turned over to law enforcement authorities within a day. The report was submitted to Law, who has final say on the policy.

Finkelhor was pleased with the work of the commission, which he said functioned smoothly and collaboratively. "Our recommendations went far beyond what was proposed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and most of the other archdioceses, whose policies we reviewed. We were much more specific and detailed, and have a number of new ideas, like the registry and a prohibition on archdiocese officials interviewing child victims themselves."

Finkelhor said he does have concerns about the church being able to draw on all the resources it needs to make the necessary changes.

"While there are many talented and well-qualified people eager to help, the archdiocese seems to be very concerned not to affiliate with anyone who can be publicly tied in any way, even fairly peripherally, to ideas and organizations that they disagree with, particularly in the abortion debate or around homosexuality. This slows them down, deprives them of talent and can unnecessarily alienate people. I hope they can get beyond that."

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