

Parish Administration

Safe Environment

Key Principles for Parishes to
Keep Children Safe

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Role of the Pastor

- Leadership and commitment
- Responsible for compliance with policies
- Delegates tasks to other staff members – Coordinator, DRE, Principal, Sports/Youth Minister
- Respond to all reports of incidents
- Take corrective action
- Openness about our child protection efforts

Safe Environment Coordinator

- Help with administration and record-keeping
- **Best Practice** -- Appoint one Coordinator for the entire parish
 - Some pastors prefer to have one coordinator for each program (e.g., DRE for religious education, Principal for school)
- Communication is critical

Safe Environment Requirements

- Screening
 - Personal screening
 - Background Check
- Training
 - Initial training – new staff
 - Continuing Education – refreshers
- Code of Conduct and Policies
- Only those in compliance may be in contact with kids
- **Best Practice** – 100% compliance, layers of protection

Screening

- Required for **all** new personnel **before** they come in contact with children
- Personal screening
 - Application and References
- Background Check
 - Criminal record and sex offender registries
 - Continual monitoring system keeps checks updated
 - Results – only communicated to Parish if the person may be a risk to children
- **Best Practice** – Screen everyone up front

Training

- All staff must be trained within 45 days of starting
- VIRTUS Protecting God's Children
 - Clergy, principals, teachers, DRE's
 - Class is available online
- Safer Spaces training
 - Other employees and volunteers
 - Class is available online
- VIRTUS Vulnerable Adult Training
 - Homebound, intellectual/developmental disabilities
- Annual refreshers – continuing education
- Children's training – every year in school or RE
- Best Practice – Train staff before starting work, have Coordinator follow up with others, periodic refreshers

Supervision of Staff

- The Code of Conduct and Policies
 - Never alone with a child
 - No private contacts or gifts
 - No private electronic communications (**especially** texting and emails from private accounts)
 - Great care with social networking (Facebook)
- Observe proper boundaries – friendly, not friends
 - Great care with any physical contact
- **Best Practice** – Have all staff on alert; “If you see something, say something”

Response to Reports

- General Rules
 - Listen with love and openness
 - Report to supervisor and the Pastor
 - Do not conduct an internal investigation of the incident
 - Call Safe Environment or Legal Affairs for guidance, especially about reporting to the authorities (the Child Abuse Hotline)
 - **If the child is at risk, call 911 immediately**
 - Take internal corrective action (e.g., suspending personnel)
 - Offer assistance to the child and parents
- **Best Practice** – The safety of the child is the paramount concern; call Safe Environment for advice

Administration

- Records should be kept at the Parish
 - Secure files for personnel records (e.g., background check forms)
 - Back-up copies of training records
 - Memos of any incidents or reports
- Rosters are periodically sent by Safe Environment
 - Lists of all active personnel
 - Ensure that all are listed accurately
 - Bring everyone into compliance immediately
 - Return to our Office promptly
- **Best Practice** – Have the Coordinator maintain records

Parish Visitations

- We have assembled a team of former NYPD detectives and ranking officers
- Goal: help parishes implement the program, raise compliance levels, identify potential vulnerabilities, and learn best practices.
- **Lessons Learned**: need for better intra-parish communication, concerns about physical security (lights, cameras, access, separation), need for better record-keeping, benefits of single Coordinator

Contact Information

- Safe Environment Policies and all forms and documents are available at our Office website:
 - <https://tinyurl.com/archny-safe-environment>
- Call us for any questions: 646-794-2810
- Email safe@archny.org or sepdirector@archny.org
- Emergencies: email sepdirector@archny.org