

Administration for a Safe Environment

The Church is acutely conscious of everything that injures the dignity of the human person. She understands that all human rights spring from this dignity, which is the constant object of Christian concern and commitment.

What concerns the Church above all is the integral development of the human person and of all peoples. She notes with joy that a beneficial trend is advancing and permeating peoples of the earth, making them ever more aware of the dignity of the individual. Her vigorous insistence on respect for human rights and her decisive rejection of all their violations are clear expressions of that consciousness. (GDC 18).

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Directives and Resources of Safe Environment Office

The full policies of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies and Program must be implemented in all sessions and activities of the Parish Religious Education Program. These policies and programs are to be found both on the *Safe Environment web page* and in the *Safe Environment Resource Manual*.

The purpose of this chapter of the *Archdiocesan Handbook for Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education* is to assist the Director* in fulfilling the administrative requirements of the Safe Environment Program within the context of the Parish Religious Education Program.

This chapter also includes administrative guidance for the Director concerning sexual harassment in the workplace.

*For the sake of brevity, the title “Director” is used throughout and refers to the Catechetical Administrator of the Religious Education Program, whether Director or Coordinator.

*Only the word “parent” will be used throughout this chapter but the intent is to refer to the child’s primary caretaker, whether parent or guardian.

Safe Environment Training for Children and Youth

Each year the Parish Religious Education Program provides to each child and youth in the Religious Education Program, the curriculum entitled *Right, Safe, and Good Relationships*. To do this teaching, the Religious Education Director chooses Catechists qualified for the subject matter. The lessons can be given on a one-time basis or in segments throughout the year. The latter method is preferred because it solves the problem of children being absent when the lesson is given.

Lesson plans for each grade level have been made available by the Safe Environment Office for use by each Parish Religious Education Program. These are found on the Safe Environment website under *Children's Curriculum*.

Parent * Notification

The Safe Environment Training Program must be explained in the Religious Education Program Parent Handbook and references provided for the Safe Environment webpage. Parents must be notified as to when the parish Religious Education Program will give the Safe Environment training to their children and be invited to preview the materials to be used.

Parent Opt-Out

Parents have the option to exempt their child from any session of the Safe Environment Training. If this is their choice, they must complete and sign the *Parent Opt-Out Form*. This form is kept in the Religious Education Office file. The Opt-Out option and procedure should be stated in the parent handbook.

End of the Year Report

The *End of the Year Report* gives the total number of children trained in the Safe Environment Curriculum during the current school year and the number who did not receive the training. It must be completed by the Director and sent to the Regional Catechetical Office by May 1.

Due May 1

Catechetical Office



Handing On the Faith with Excellence

Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program End-of-Year Report

Date: _____

Director/Coordinator: _____

Parish Name: _____

Parish Address: _____

Parish Number: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

This is a summary report that covers all children trained during entire academic year.

Total No. of Children in Program	No. of Children Instructed	No. of Children Opted Out by Parent/Guardian

Send Completed Report to Regional Catechetical Director by May 1.

Safe Environment Training for Children/Youth

Parent Opt-Out Form for Religious Education Program

The Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth and the Safe Environment Policies of the Archdiocese of New York require that all children and youth in our schools and religious education programs be given Safe Environment training that is age appropriate and in accord with Catholic moral principles. The Archdiocese of New York provides such training through the curriculum entitled *Right, Safe and Good Relationships*. This training also provides to parents supplementary training materials which are available on the internet at www.archny.org/pastoral/safe-environment-program/training/. If you choose not to have your child participate in this training, please sign this form and acknowledge that the supplementary training materials have been offered to you.

Parish Name _____

Name of Child/Youth in Program _____

Grade Level of Child/Youth _____

Parent's Name _____

I do not wish my child to participate in the Safe Environment training offered by his/her Religious Education Program and I acknowledge that the Safe Environment training materials have been offered to me.

Parent's Signature

Date

Personnel Requirements from the Safe Environment Office

Every Parish Religious Education Program must fully comply with the Archdiocesan Safe Environment policies and requirements.

Every Parish Religious Education Program must have the *Resource Manual of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office*. In addition, the information is available on the Safe Environment Program web page and the Director must be familiar with this essential site..

Screening Process and Training

All prospective Religious Education Directors, Catechists and staff members, whether paid or volunteer, whose position or duties would place them in regular contact with minors, must:

- complete the Safe Environment screening process including submitting to a background check before starting work;
- acknowledge receipt of the Archdiocesan policy relating to sexual misconduct and the appropriate Code of Conduct;
- complete the Safe Environment training appropriate to their position within 45 days of commencing duties.

If a program is scheduled to last for less than 45 days (e.g., vacation bible schools, summer camps,), all new personnel must complete the Safe Environment requirements before the program begins.

If any person fails to satisfy the Safe Environment requirements by the appropriate date, they may not come into contact with minors in any program or activity of the Archdiocese or any of its parishes or institutions until they complete the Safe Environment requirements.

Required Background Check Forms

The Parish level is responsible for giving the Background Check forms to the Parish personnel, collecting them, returning the completed forms to the Safe Environment Office and keeping copies in the appropriate and secure Parish file.

The Pastor is responsible for the Background Check forms for the Director of Religious Education.

The Director of Religious Education is responsible for the Background Check forms for the Catechists, Catechetist Assistants, Secretaries and any other parish personnel regularly present during the Religious Education Program sessions.

To be a Catechist, a person must be at least 18 years of age. Someone 16 or 17 years of age can be an assistant to the Catechist. The 16 or 17 year-old assistant must complete a Background Check Form but only with parental consent.

Youth 15 years of age or younger may only serve as helpers to the adult Catechist. They cannot complete a Background Check form but they must be advised of the Safe Environment Code of Conduct . They fall into the category of those whom the Catechist must supervise

In filling out the Background Check form, the Catechist or Catechist Assistant should use these precise titles. They should not use the title of "Teacher" or "Teacher-Assistant".

The Safe Environment Office will not accept any completed and signed Background Check forms that are older than 90 days. It is therefore necessary for the Director to submit the signed forms to the Safe Environment Office promptly..

If a background check results in a red-flag on any person who is regularly present during the Religious Education Program sessions, the Pastor is notified. The Pastor makes the decision whether or not to allow the person flagged to take part in the Religious Education Program.

The Background Check Forms consist of the following:

- *Archdiocesan Policy on Background Checks* (kept by employee or volunteer)
- *Fact sheet on Background Checks* (kept by employee or volunteer)
- *Summary of Rights under Fair Credit Reporting Act* (kept by employee or volunteer)
- *Sexual Misconduct Policy, both Summary & Full Policy* (kept by employee or volunteer)
- *Code of Conduct* (kept by employee or volunteer)
- *Authorization & Disclosure for Background Check* (filled out by employee or volunteer, copy sent to Safe Environment Office & original copy kept in Parish files)
- *Catechetical Office Volunteer Application* (filled out by catechist and kept in Religious Education Office files)

These forms are available both in Spanish and English in the *Safe Environment Resource Manual* and on the Safe Environment web page.

Rosters

Twice a year (Fall and Spring), the Safe Environment Office will send to the Directors of Religious Education a roster of Religious Education Program personnel. This roster should agree with the list of volunteers and employees in the parish Religious Education Program. Any discrepancies should be addressed and notations made to the roster.

N. B. Catechists whose names are missing should not be added to the roster. Rather, the Director immediately gives the Catechist the Background Check form to be completed and then the Director sends it to the Safe Environment Office. If the Catechist's name is missing from the roster for any other reason, the Director contacts the Safe Environment Office.

The parish Director returns the annotated roster to the Regional Catechetical Office and it is the Regional Office that sends it on to the Safe Environment Office.

Whenever people change institutions or parishes, even within the Archdiocesan structure, a new background check is required.

If a person is working in two parishes simultaneously, that person needs two background checks.

Safe Environment Training

The packet of materials for the training programs includes a sign-in sheet. A master copy of the sign-in sheet is also included in the *Safe Environment Resource Manual*. On completion of the training, the facilitator must send the Sign-in sheets to the Safe-Environment Office.

There are 2 levels of training:

Virtus Training Program

Required to attend are: Clergy, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministers and CYO Moderators, Catholic School personnel, and anyone in a supervisory capacity over children and youth.

These sessions are 3 hours each and presented by personnel from the Safe Environment Office. They are offered monthly throughout the Archdiocese, with dates, times and locations listed on Safe Environment web site. Participants must pre-register on line.

Safer Spaces Training Program

Required to attend are: Catechists, catechist assistants, secretaries, maintenance staff and other parish personnel regularly present during Religious Education Program sessions

This training is 40 minutes long and is facilitated by the Director of Religious Education. The Director must first have taken the *Virtus* Training. The *Safer Spaces* training consists of a presentation on DVD supported by a facilitator's guide and a master copy of the training booklet. Each parish Religious Education Program has received these materials from the Safe Environment Office. *Safer Spaces* is available from the Safe Environment Office in both English and Spanish.

Safer Spaces Training may also be completed online. Those volunteers who wish to take this session must have already submitted a Background Check form to the Safe Environment Office through the parish.

Any youth 15 years of age or younger, when signing the attendance list for *Safer Spaces*, must write their birth date next to their name.

Safe Environment Checklist

Training

- Director takes 3-hour *Virtus* Training.
- Catechists take *Safer Spaces* training online or on site. The training is taken after the Background check has cleared and within the limit of 45 days of beginning their ministry in the parish,.

Background Checks

- Catechist submits Catechist Application to Director of Religious Education, who keeps it in the secure file of the Religious Education Program.
- Catechist submits Background Check form to Director. (Catechist cannot work with children until the background check has been approved.)
- Director sends to Safe Environment Office all Background Checks as soon as possible.
- Catechist signs acknowledgement that he/she has read the sexual misconduct policy.
- Director ensures that all Catechists & program personnel complete the Background check process.

Rosters

- The Fall roster is sent to the Director from the Safe Environment Office. The Director makes sure all the Catechists are on the list and have taken the required training. Then returns roster to Regional Catechetical Office.
- The Spring roster is sent to the Director from the Safe Environment Office. The Director makes sure all the Catechists are on the list and have taken the required training. Then returns roster to Regional Catechetical Office.

Instruction of Children

- Children/youth in sessions are instructed in the *Right, Safe, and Good Relationships* Curriculum.
- In the Fall, parents are notified about the opt-out option by Director of Religious Education and sent the required materials.
- By May 1, Director sends End-of-Year Report to Regional Catechetical Office, giving the number of children who did and who did not receive the instruction.

Designated Reporters for the Parish Community

Archdiocesan policy requires that the Pastor, the Director of Religious Education, the Catechists and the staff of the Religious Education Program report all incidents of suspected child abuse following the procedure outlined below. These personnel are not “Mandated Reporters” under New York State Social Services Law section 413. However, they are required to report all incidents following the policy of the New York Archdiocese and the directions of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office.

The Pastor is the legal head of the parish and thus is ultimately responsible for what happens there. Thus, he must be notified of all incidents and should be made aware of all developments.

When Archdiocesan policy requires that a report be made on an abuse incident and the Pastor declines to make the report, the Director of Religious Education will be directed by the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office to make the report, or the Safe Environment Office itself will make the report.

Since a parish commitment to protecting its children and helping its families is much broader than its Religious Education Program, its response plan should also be broader.

Process to be Followed in Response to Suspected Child Abuse Internal to the Religious Education Program and Involving a Parish Employee or Volunteer

An "internal incident" is an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is made against any person within the parish Religious Education Program (i.e. priest, deacon, sister, brother, layman, laywoman, employee, volunteer), In response the following is done.

- The person(s) receiving the information immediately informs the Director.
- The Director immediately informs the Pastor.
- Either the Pastor or the Director immediately calls the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office (646-794-2897). (If Safe Environment Office cannot be reached, the Office of Legal Affairs is called.) The Safe Environment Office will direct the parish leadership through the situation according to Archdiocesan policy.
- If there is a real and imminent threat to the security or safety of the child, the Pastor or Director must call the police immediately. In an emergency, they should not wait to speak to the Safe Environment Office before dialing 911. The first priority is to ensure child's safety.
- Guided by Safe Environment Office, the Pastor informs the parents of the complaint.
- The Director of Religious Education informs the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office.
- The Pastor advises the person making the complaint (or their parent) to notify the District Attorney of the appropriate county.
- If the Pastor judges the complaint to be credible, i.e. judges that there is "reasonable cause to believe", he places the accused person on leave at once.

(Employee continues to receive salary/benefits until there is a resolution of the complaint or an investigation shows that improper custodial conduct occurred, at which time salary/benefits may cease and employee is placed on unpaid leave pending the outcome of the investigation.)
- If the employee/volunteer admits to the alleged abuse of a minor, he/she is to be terminated. If found guilty in civil court, the employee/volunteer is to be terminated and is not to be considered for future work or service in the Archdiocese.
- To protect the reputation and good name of both the accused and the victims, anyone having information about an incident or case of child abuse is not to share that information with anyone except the appropriate authorities.

Process to be Followed in Response to Suspected Child Abuse External to Religious Education Program and Not Involving a Parish Employee or Volunteer

An “external incident” is something that happens to a child/youth outside of the Religious Education Program and not committed by a member of the parish staff. The report is typically a self-report by a child /youth to a Catechist. In response the following is done.

- The Catechist immediately notifies the Director.
- The Director immediately informs the Pastor.
- Either the Pastor or the Director immediately calls the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office (646-794-2807) which will direct the parish leadership through the situation according to Archdiocesan policy.
- If there is imminent danger to the child, the Director or Pastor must call the police immediately. They should not wait to speak to the Safe Environment Office before dialing 911. The first priority is to ensure the child’s safety.
- The Director of Religious Education informs the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office.
- In all cases, if there is **reasonable suspicion**, with some specific signs, that child abuse/neglect/ is occurring, the Safe Environment Office will direct the Pastor or Director to call the **N.Y. Child Abuse Register (800-342-3720)** and report it. Then Parish leadership is to fully cooperate with the investigation of the N.Y. authorities

It is not advisable to wait to be absolutely certain that abuse/neglect is occurring. Reporting in good faith protects the complainant from any liability, even if the report proves unfounded. Reporting is the first step in bringing help to both the abused child and the abusive families.

- If the family/abuser tries to contact the parish leadership about the report, the parish leadership must not have any conversation. Rather they must let the appropriate authorities know about any contact or harassment.

Further specific instructions which the Safe Environment Office will provide to the Pastor and Director will depend on the circumstances in each case.

e.g. If child’s parent or someone in the home is the offender, the child cannot be sent back to the abuser. The Pastor/Director would be instructed to call the police immediately and cooperate fully with the authorities. If the abuser is a non-family member, the Pastor/Director would be instructed to notify the child’s parent unless that would create a risk for the child.

Characteristics of the Abused Child

Child abuse and child neglect are complex problems that are not confined to any one family, racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic or religious group. They represent a serious breakdown in the family structure, and both the Gospel Message and the legal system of this country call upon the assistance of the wider community in addressing the problem. (GDC 139)

Learning the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect may help the Director and Catechists to recognize when a child, youth and family begin to show the risk factors for abuse or neglect.

There are 4 main categories of abuse:

- physical abuse,
- emotional abuse,
- neglect.
- sexual abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury to a child caused by a parent or caretaker which results in, or threatens, serious injury to the child. This may include excessive corporal punishment.

Verbal harassment, threats, and the systematic destruction of the child's self-esteem are all part of the mental and emotional harm inflicted by emotional abuse.

Neglect means depriving a child of conditions necessary for normal development including food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education and supervision.

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, a youth or another child in a position of power uses a child for sexual gratification or allows another to do so.

Studies indicate that children rarely make false allegations of abuse. If a child speaks of abuse, it should be taken very seriously.

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises or welts: may be in various stages of healing, in clusters of unusual patterns, or on several different areas of the body
- Unexplained burns: may be in shape of cigarette, rope, iron, or caused by immersion which may appear sock-or glove-like
- Unexplained lacerations to mouth, lips, arms, legs or torso
- Unexplained skeletal injuries , stiff swollen joints, or multiple fractures
- Missing or loosened teeth
- Human bite marks
- Unexplained abrasions or bald spots
- Appearance of injuries after an absence from school (weekend, or vacation)

Behavioral Indicators

- Easily frightened or fearful: of adults/parents, of physical contact, or when other children cry
- Destructive to self and/or others
- Extremes of behavior: aggressive, withdrawn
- Poor social relations
- Learning problems; poor academic performance, short attention span, language delayed
- Runaway or delinquent behavior
- Complaints of soreness or moves awkwardly
- Accident prone
- Wears clothing that clearly is meant to cover body when not appropriate
- Seems afraid to go home

Indicators of Abusive Caretaker

- Describes the child in a consistently negative manner
- Is a harsh disciplinarian
- Conceals or misleads a provider about a child's injuries

Emotional Maltreatment

Physical Indicators

- Failure to thrive
- Developmental lags
- Wetting of bed/pants
- Thumb sucking
- Appears sad
- Speech disorders, such as stammering or stuttering
- Health problems: ulcers, asthma, skin disorders, severe allergies, obesity, extreme weight loss
- Poor appearance
- Drug or alcohol abuse

Behavioral Indicators

- Habit disorders: sucking, biting, rocking, etc.
- Destructive to self and/or others
- Extremes in behavior: aggressive, withdrawn
- Phobias, sleep disorders,
- Developmental lags: mental, emotional
- Learning problems
- Inhibition of play
- Cruelty, vandalism, stealing, cheating, fire setting, etc.
- Sadomasochistic behavior toward animals and other children
- Head banging
- Overly adaptive behavior: inappropriately adult or infantile
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation

Indicators of Emotionally Abusive Caretaker

- Rejects, ignores, terrorizes, or isolates the child

Neglect

Physical Indicators

- Poor growth pattern
- Constant hunger
- Malnutrition
- Dark circles under eyes
- Poor hygiene: body order, lice
- Inappropriate clothing
- Constant fatigue
- Listlessness
- Falls asleep in school
- Consistent lack of supervision especially for long periods or in dangerous activities
- Unexplained bruises or injuries as a result of poor supervision
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs such as:
 - lack of proper immunizations
 - gross dental problems
 - need for glasses/hearing aids

Behavioral Indicators

- Developmental lags
- Begs or steals food, forages through garbage
- Always hungry
- Destructive to self and/or others
- Extremes in behavior: aggressive, withdrawn
- Hyperactive
- Assumes adult responsibilities or acts in pseudo-mature fashion
- Exhibits infantile behavior
- Delinquent behavior
- Depressed/apathetic; states "no one cares"
- Frequent school absences or chronic tardiness
- Excessively Seeks attention and/or affection
- Hypochondria

Indicators of Neglect from Caretaker

- May be substance abuser
- Has chaotic lifestyle which might include loss of job, incoming, housing

Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Genital/anal itching, pain, swelling, or burning
- Genital/anal bruises or bleeding
- Frequent urinary tract or yeast infections
- Pain on urination
- Vaginal/penile discharge
- Poor sphincter control
- Venereal disease
- Pregnancy
- Chronic unexplained sore throats
- Frequent psychosomatic illnesses
- Loss of appetite

Behavioral Indicators

- Sudden radical behavior change
- Extremes in behavior: aggressive, withdrawn
- Regressive behavior
- Runaway or delinquent behavior
- Depressed, apathetic or suicidal
- Destructive to self and/or others
- Poor social relations
- Refuses to change for gym
- Does artwork depicting sexual themes
- Behaves seductively and has sexual knowledge beyond age
- Compulsive use of language referring to genitals
- Sexually acts out or attempts to force or coerce other children to be sexual
- Complains of soreness or moves or sits awkwardly
- Wears clothing that covers body when not appropriate
- Compulsive bathing
- Has nightmares

Indicators of Abusive Caretaker

- Is extremely protective of family privacy
- Does not allow the child to be involved in extracurricular or developmentally appropriate activities such as being with friends or dating

Warning Signs of a Sexual Abuse Offender

Sexual abuse can occur in any environment including homes, churches, schools and religious education programs. In 8 out of 10 reported cases of child sexual abuse, the victim knows the offender. Offenders go to incredible lengths to ensure that they are not strangers to the child. They can spend months and often years grooming entire communities to accept them as trustworthy and upright. We need to be aware of the warning signs that a sexual predator may be lurking about.

Some signs are more obvious than others:

- Uses bad language around children;
- Tells children dirty jokes;
- Shows pornography to children.

Other signs are a little more subtle:

- Always wants to wrestle or tickle;
- Always wants to be alone with children;
- Prefers to be with children instead of adults;
- Discourages involvement from other adults.

Some signs can be hidden entirely:

- Gives gifts to children without permission;
- Allows children to do things they are not normally allowed to do (e.g. drink alcohol);
- Encourages the children to keep secrets.

Anti-Sexual Harassment

Developed by Office of Human Resources, Archdiocese of New York

Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace is unacceptable behavior on the part of any employee of the Archdiocese of New York. In addition, it is a violation of Federal, State, and City law.

When it exists, it is a problem that affects everyone, at all levels and in all types of work. Each one of us is responsible for compliance against sexual harassment. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring a work environment that is free of all types of discrimination, and harassment including sexual harassment.

Policy

The Archdiocese of New York is committed to providing a work environment reflecting the highest standards of respect for the personal dignity of every employee.

The Archdiocese neither condones nor permits sexual harassment and undertakes to address, prevent and correct any sexually harassing behavior in the work environment.

Staff members are prohibited from initiating or engaging in sexually harassing conduct or behavior.

Definition

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical, when:

- submission, acquiescence or rejection of such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a condition of employment; or

- submission, acquiescence or rejection of such conduct is used as a factor in employment decisions including but not limited to evaluation, training, promotion, compensation, duties, transfers, privileges and other terms or conditions of employment; or

- such conduct substantially interferes with employment by creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment.

Grievance Procedure

Staff members who personally experience sexual harassment or witness it are required to report such incidents to their supervisor* who will inform the Office of Legal Affairs. Immediate reporting ensures prompt response and resolution of objectionable conduct.

The Office of Legal Affairs, in coordination with the Pastor and Director of Religious Education, will promptly conduct and document an investigation of each grievance reported.

The Office of Legal Affairs will submit a recommendation to the Pastor. Such recommendation may include but is not limited to:

- Formal warning
- Suspension without pay
- Termination of employment or services.

Directives for Making a Sexual Harassment Complaint

If you think you are being sexually harassed in your workplace, the following procedure should be used.

- Make your displeasure known to the person harassing you when appropriate. See if the behavior stops.
- If the inappropriate behavior continues, inform your supervisor* who will contact the Office of Legal Affairs.
- Interviews will be conducted in a timely fashion.
- Confidentiality will be maintained. Only those directly named by the complainant will be interviewed.
- If harassment is determined to be present, appropriate action will follow.
- The situation will be monitored to insure there is no further harassment.

**In the parish religious education setting, the "supervisors" are the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education and ultimately the Pastor.*