

# SAFE ENVIRONMENT PLAN

## In conjunction with the Sexual Misconduct Toward Minors and Others at Risk Policy of the Diocese of Gary

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6-13-03  
Revised 6-11-04  
Revised 9-21-04

### PURPOSE

The Diocese of Gary has established the Sexual Misconduct Toward Minors and Others at Risk in July 1993. To implement this policy as revised on April 1, 2003, a Safe Environment Plan has been established in order to:

- provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth in the faith communities within our Diocese of Gary
- assist the Diocese in evaluating a person's suitability to work with children, youth or the elderly
- satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process
- provide a system to respond to the victims and their families, as well as the accused
- reduce the possibility of false accusations against clergy, employees, and volunteers
- reduce the risk exposure of the parishes and the Diocese of Gary

### DEFINITIONS

#### Background Check

The verification of information provided on Application for Employment or Volunteer Service, including a minimum of three reference contacts.

#### Child Abuse

Consists of any of the following:

- a. Sexual Abuse includes any act or interaction whether it involves genital or physical contact, with or without consent, even if initiated by the child, which involves sexual contact, molestation or sexual exploitation of a child by a parent or any other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not, to include:
  1. The intentional touching of the genitals or intimate parts including the female breast, the genital area, groin, inner thigh and buttocks of a child or of a perpetrator by a child for purposes of sexual arousal or gratification
  2. Rape, sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal), oral/genital, oral/anal contact

3. The intentional touching and/or displaying of one's own genitals or intimate parts including the female breast, the genital area, groin, inner thigh and buttocks in the presence and view of a child for purposes of sexual arousal or gratification
  4. Permitting, causing, encouraging or assisting in the depiction of or posing for viewing by any person, either in person or by way of graphic means including digital or photographic image of the partially or fully unclothed body of a child, displaying intimate parts, in motion or not in motion, alone or with other persons, or the depiction of a child in apparent observation of sex acts by others in the child's presence
  5. Displaying or distributing to a child any picture, photograph, book, pamphlet, digital image, movie or magazine the cover or content of which is principally made of descriptions or depictions of sex acts or contact, or which is principally made up of descriptions or depictions of sexual acts or contact, or which consists of pictures of nude or partially denuded figures posed or presented in a manner which the average person applying contemporary community standards would find, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest.
- b. Physical Abuse includes any act which
1. Willfully causes or inflicts physical injury to a child or
  2. Willfully causes mental injury or psychological injury to a child by intentionally engendering fear of physical injury to that child.
  3. It is the policy of the Diocese of Gary that corporal punishment of a child is prohibited in all entities under the auspices of the Diocese of Gary.
  4. Physical abuse does not include the appropriate physical restraint of a child who is attempting to injure another person or him/herself, or the appropriate physical direction of a child away from danger or the minimum restraint necessary to place a child in "time out" or other appropriate limitation of movement to promote the child's regaining of safety and emotional control.
- c. Neglect includes
1. Abandonment of a child by a parent, custodian or guardian
  2. Lack of care by not providing appropriate and necessary food, shelter, clothing and education
  3. Not providing care or control in respect to physical or emotional health; the refusal or inability to discharge parental or custodial obligations; and expressions of intention by parent, guardian or institution to discontinue care.

#### Criminal Background Check

The submission of form to provide information on existence and content of a criminal arrest record.

## Substantial Contact

Contact with children in which the duration and scope in both time and exposure to children is neither trivial nor limited and may occur on a routine and/or ongoing basis.

## EDUCATION

### Purpose and Objective

This policy applies to the programs that provide specific training in the prevention, recognition and reporting of child abuse that are developed and/or offered by the Diocese and is

- a. **Required** of all Diocesan personnel and volunteers directly involved or in contact with children
- b. Required of all children and youth who participate in activities, services and programs under the auspices of the Dioceses and
- c. **Recommended** of parents and other adults who participate or have children who participate in activities, services and programs under the auspices of the Diocese.

The objective of these programs is to prevent, recognize and appropriately report child abuse through educational programs, such as seminars, workshops and meetings, provided by the Diocese and completed by all Diocesan personnel who have substantial contact with children, on an annual basis.

### Personnel

The following Diocesan personnel shall participate in the “Protecting God’s Children” program on child abuse:

- a. All active priests, deacons and members of religious communities in the Diocese of Gary
- b. All principals, administrative staff, teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, all volunteers and staff at all levels, including aides, janitors, food service workers, school nurses, and office personnel of all Catholic elementary, middle and high schools
- c. All directors, catechists, staff, and volunteers of religious education programs and youth ministry programs
- d. All Diocesan personnel providing child care services
- e. All youth ministry coordinators, directors/coaches of children’s activities (e.g., athletics, scout troops, choir, camp counselors, etc.) and similar Diocesan personnel who provide such services.

The Bishop shall have the authority to direct additional personnel of the Diocese (other than those specified in a-e) to attend the annual education programs.

## Educational Curriculum

VIRTUS will provide the training program for adults. Each parish will have two people trained as facilitators. The facilitators will provide the training sessions for the adults according to the timeline.

### Deadlines for Completing Training

New staff and volunteers who will have substantial contact with children shall receive appropriate preventive education programs at the earliest possible date and no later than sixty (60) days following the assumption of their duties.

Pastor/parochial administrators, principals and agency directors will ensure that all personnel required to receive training do so within the requisite time period or are removed from contact with children for failure to attend appropriate training programs. Parishes, schools and agency offices will maintain lists of those who have completed the training requirement.

### Educational Programs for Students

The Superintendent of Schools, the Director of Religious Education, and the Youth Director will ensure that age-appropriate abuse prevention education programs are available at both the elementary (K-8<sup>th</sup> grade) and secondary (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) levels. Each school, religious education program and youth program is required to submit the curriculum to the School Office.

Such programs shall be provided annually to children in all grades of every Catholic school and religious education programs as well as youth ministry programs in the Diocese.

### Assessment and Evaluation of Educational Efforts

With a view toward assessing the progress of the educational efforts called for by this Policy, records shall be kept of:

- a. The number of training courses offered
- b. The number of training courses attended by
  1. Priests, permanent deacons and religious
  2. Staff members
  3. Volunteers
  4. Parents
  5. Children and youth
- c. Proportion of new staff and volunteers trained by deadlines
- d. Participant evaluations of training content and learning opportunities
- f. Curriculums of the schools, religious education programs and youth groups

The Safety Committee in consultation with the appropriate constituent groups will review the child abuse prevention curricula every three years.

## REQUIREMENTS

Each Diocesan entity shall:

- Appoint a Safety Officer (clergy, staff or volunteer) to oversee the Safe Environment Program.
- Implement the Safe Environment Program following the guidelines and procedures found in the Diocesan Safe Environment Program Booklet.

## SCREENING PROCEDURES

The following screening procedures are to be used with all clergy, staff, and volunteers who work with children, youth, senior citizens or the developmentally disabled. All collected information is to be treated as confidential.

- Screening. Volunteers should have attended the parish an adequate length of time to become well known by the other adults and leaders.
- Employment application. Those applying for a paid position must complete an employment application.
- Reference check. Maintain a written record of each reference check.
- Interview. Interview each new applicant.
- Criminal Background Check. Conduct a criminal background check on clergy, staff, and volunteers who work with children, youth, senior citizens, or the developmentally disabled.  
Criminal background checks will be completed every five years on active clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- If the person hired has not lived in Indiana in the past five (5) years, the parish must pay for a federal criminal background check. Contact the School Office for the information.

### Results of Criminal Background Checks

- When the criminal background check on a candidate is clear, the pastor will be notified that everything is fine.
- A questionable criminal background check will be reviewed by the Safe Environment Committee. The Pastor will receive the committee's decision of whether or not the individual is cleared.

- Anyone with a pending conviction or who has been convicted of sexual misconduct will not be permitted to work or volunteer in a Diocesan sponsored environment.

Committee members are: Bishop's Delegate for Sexual Misconduct Cases, Coordinator of Safe Environment Program, Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, VIRTUS Coordinator, Director of Religious Education, and Director of Youth Ministry.

### Confidentiality

Like all personal records, information obtained through the Screening, Application, Reference, Interview, and Criminal Background Check must be kept confidential. It is recommended that all material be kept in a locked file cabinet and access to it be restricted to administrators. These materials should be destroyed after three years of the employees' employment is terminated or the volunteer ceases his/her volunteer duties.

# PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR YOUTH

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## Supervision Procedures

- Have adequate number of adults present at events involving children and youth.
- Have two or more adults present for events involving children or youth in higher risk settings.
- Monitor your facilities during church services and all school or other activities.
- Release children only to parent or guardian.
- Obtain parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking children or youth away from church/school property.
- Use qualified drivers for any church or school vehicle.
- Always obtain parental approval as well as current health form before permitting any minor to participate in athletic events or any other activity that involves potential risk.
- Have minors use a “buddy system” whenever they go on trips away from church property.
- All adult leadership and sponsors should be approved in advance by the appropriate chief administrator for any activity that takes place off church/school property.
- There is always to be a good ratio of adults to young people, most often this would be eight youth to one adult. More adults are usually necessary for overnight events or trips.

## Behavioral Guidelines for Working With Children

All clergy, staff and volunteers of the Diocese will observe the following guidelines for dealing with minors:

- Priests and adults must always meet with young people in areas that are visible and accessible. The obvious exception is the Reconciliation Room in the church.
- Only priests, seminarians or their immediate family members may be overnight guests in rectories.
- One-on-one meetings with young persons are to be held in a public area, or if that is not possible, then the door to the room is to be left open and someone on the parish staff is to be notified about the meeting.
- Driving alone with a young person is to be avoided.
- Individual young persons (under 18) are not to socialize in the rectory with an individual priest. Other adults must be present. Minors are never to be permitted in the sleeping areas of the rectory. In addition, no unaccompanied minor should ever be taken to cottages or on trips with other adults present.
- Adults are not permitted to possess or drink alcohol during student events.

- Adults may never buy alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos, or reading material that is inappropriate and share it with young people.
- Do not serve as chaperone for activities that conflict with curfew laws pertaining to minors.
- Touching should be age appropriate and based on the need of the minor and not the need of the adult. Avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. If a minor initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper.
- Do not engage in the physical discipline of a minor. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with your supervisor and/or the parents of the minor.
- Do not be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facility, automobile, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
- Do not be alone with a minor who is not a member of your immediate family.
- Adults are never to share a bed with young people when on a trip. Sharing a bedroom, other than a dormitory style room, must always be avoided.
- Topics, vocabulary, recordings, films, games or the use of computer software or any other form of personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents should not be employed with minors. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.
- Do not administer medication of any kind without written parental permission.
- If you recognize inappropriate personal or physical attraction developing between yourself and a minor, maintain clear professional boundaries between yourself and the minor or refer the minor to another adult supervisor.
- If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and use locations that create accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions, and make appropriate referrals. Notify parents of the meetings.
- Do not give minors keys to church facilities. If the minor has a key as a result of being a church employee or volunteer, the minor should be properly screened.
- Do not drive a church or school vehicle unless you have received prior authorization and have the appropriate license and/or certification.
- Do not permit minors to cross a road by themselves while they are in your custodial care.
- Do not take photographs of minors while they are unclothed or dressing (e.g., in a locker room or bathing facility).
- If you observe anyone (adult or minor) abusing a minor, take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and to provide a safe environment for the minor. Report the misconduct (see Reporting Procedures).
- Criminal background checks and references are to be made on volunteers who work with young people.