



Diocese of Steubenville
Safe Environment Program

Overview

The Relationship between the Decree and the Safe Environment Program

Decree on Child Protection

- *Paragraph 2 of Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* from the US Catholic Bishops mandate the creation of clear diocesan policies for preventing the abuse of children and for handling any allegations of abuse.
- The *Decree on Child Protection* of the Diocese of Steubenville is a response to the mandate of the US Bishops. The Decree contains the diocesan policies for individuals (clergy, employees and volunteers) and institutions of the diocese that have contact with children and minors.

Safe Environment Program

- Article 12 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* from the US Catholic Bishops requires Safe Environment Programs. Our program is an outgrowth of the Charter and the specific sections of the Decree that deal with the Safe Environment Program.
- It contains lesson plans, resources for parents and educators, and all necessary forms to be completed.

Foundation in Church Teaching:

1) “Guiding Principles for Addressing Sexuality and Sexual Abuse from Church Documents”

All programs addressing the topics of sexuality and sexual abuse in the Diocese of Steubenville must conform to these guidelines collected from Vatican documents.

2) “A Summary of the Theology of the Body”

Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body provides an excellent framework for forming young people and adults in the Church’s vision of human sexuality according to God’s design.

Requirements from the Decree on Child Protection:

1) Screening employees and volunteers

“Persons who serve our children as clerics, employees, regular volunteers, auxiliary services personnel, or personnel furnished by a third party contractor, contribute much to their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical well-being. Responsible supervisors must take due precautions in order to ensure that only those persons who are psychologically and temperamentally suited are chosen to work with children. It is the intention of the Diocese that no person who has been convicted of abusing a child will work with children in an office, agency, parish, school or institution of the Diocese.” (Decree on Child Protection, 2014 Edition)

Three requirements for screening employees and volunteers:

- A. References received and checked (required for employment only)
- B. Applicant’s Certification form
- C. FBI & BCI Criminal Background Checks (i.e., fingerprinting)

(See “Requirements for Personnel” from the *Safe Environment Program* on the diocesan Child Protection web-page.)

2) Communicating behavioral expectations to employees and volunteers

“Dioceses are to maintain “safe environment” programs which the diocesan bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic oral principles...[they] are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children” (Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Art. 12, Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Every employee and volunteer who has regular significant contact with children must read and sign two copies of the Code of Conduct. One copy will be filed in the parish/school office and the other will be for the person’s own records. In addition, they shall receive training in *Appropriate Boundaries when ministering to or working with Minors*.

(See “Requirements for Safe Environment Training” from the *Safe Environment Program* on the diocesan Child Protection web-page.)

3) Educating Children and Young People about appropriate behavior and how to report concerns

“Catholic schools, religious education programs, and other youth programs in Catholic agencies, parishes and institutions are to include in their health and sexuality curricula an appropriate discussion of child abuse, bullying, and safe environment training. Programs are to include training for children in practical methods to respond to abuse by adults and by peers.” (Decree on Child Protection of the Diocese of Steubenville, 2014 Edition)

Diocesan approved teaching materials and lesson plans are provided for your use, including:

You Matter Coloring Book (Grade Pre-K
Made in His Image (Grades 1 to 12)
NetSmartz Videos and Resources (Internet Safety – Older Children and Teens)

4) Educating Adults about the reality of abuse and how to report concerns

“An effective safe environment program will have... training for all adults who work with children that consists of:

- *Signs an adult may see in a child who is abused*
 - *Signs an adult may see in a person who abuses children*
 - *What actions an adult should take when they believe child abuse of any kind may be occurring*
- (Safe Environment Programs, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops web-site)*

Required Safe Environment Training resources for Employees and Volunteers include:

- A. Requirements for Safe Environment Training Chart
- B. Guiding Principles for Addressing Sexuality and Sexual Abuse
- C. A Summary of the Theology of the Body
- D. Indicators of Child Abuse
- E. Recognizing Child Abuse
- F. Appropriate Boundaries when ministering to or working with Minors
- G. Reporting Abuse...

Additional printed resources, for Parents and Educators, available upon request from the Office of Christian Formation and Schools include (in limited quantities):

- A. You Can Help Prevent Child Abuse
- B. We Can Prevent Child Sexual Abuse
- C. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse (A Parent’s Guide)
- D. What Parents should know about bullying
- E. And several Our Sunday Visitor Publications from their “Catholic Parent Know How” series, including:
 - Bullying, What Parents Can Do
 - Internet & Families
 - Keeping Our Children Safe
 - Ten Things Your Child Should Know Before Leaving Home

Resources for Parents (that educators and catechists may also find helpful), available on the diocesan Child Protection web-site, under the “Education/Training Resources” tab include:

- A. What Parents can do
- B. What Every Parent needs to know
- C. A Guide for On-line Resources for Internet Safety and the wise use of media

Additional on-line Resources for all Adults are available via direct link to other websites. These links can be found under the “Education/Training Resources” tab.

Verification of Compliance

- 1) To assist Parishes and Schools with compliance in regards to both the Decree on Child Protection and the Safe Environment Program, The Vicar General will mail a **Fall** and a **Spring** Verification of Compliance Form (VCF) to all parishes, schools, and other diocesan ministries each year.
- 2) More detailed instruction regarding the verification process can be found under the “General Information & Guidelines” Tab on the diocesan Child Protection web-site.
- 3) A copy of the VCF as well as other Safe Environment Program forms can also be found under the “Forms” tab on the diocesan Child Protection web-site.