



DIOCESE OF ORANGE OFFICE OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION

Safe Environment FAQs for Youth Ministers and Confirmation Coordinators

What do we mean by “Safe Environment”?

All churches, schools and youth organizations must ensure that children and youth who worship, study or participate in activities sponsored by a parish can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible. Parents and caregivers have the right to ask these institutions if they meet the requirements of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* before they allow their children to become involved with them.

What is the “*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*”?

The *Charter* is a comprehensive set of procedures established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June, 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors (anyone under the age of 18) by Catholic clergy. The *Charter* also contains guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of further acts of abuse. It pertains to all acts of abuse, past, present and future. (The Charter may be found at www.usccb.org/ocyp.)

How is compliance with the *Charter* monitored?

In June 2003, the Office (now Secretariat) of Child and Youth Protection began an audit process of all dioceses throughout the United States. The audit is used to determine if the diocese is implementing the practices required by the Charter. An Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter is prepared by the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection. (Additional information may be found at www.usccb.org/ocyp.)

What does the *Charter for the Protection Children and Young People* require parishes to do?

The parishes are critical to the implementation of the charter. It is there that most of the abuse occurred, and it is there that most of the prevention can be done. Parishes need to train all clergy, employees and volunteers with regular contact with children. All parish employees and volunteers need to have their background checks evaluated for suitability. This is so we can be reasonably sure that people who **should not** be around children **are not** around children. Additionally, our diocese has policies and procedures in place that parishes must follow, including a Code of Conduct that must be signed and kept on file.

What is a Code of Conduct?

A Code of Conduct identifies acceptable behavior that is legal, professional and responsible. It must include clear standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for any paid personnel and for volunteers in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and

young people. The Diocese of Orange has outlined its Code of Conduct in the “Policy Against Sexual Misconduct for Lay Employees, Non-Ordained Religious Women and Men and Volunteers”; in the “Policy Against Sexual Misconduct for Clergy and Religious Personnel”; in the brochure “Respecting the Boundaries”; and Guidelines as published under the Diocese of Orange Policies on the Shield the Vulnerable website (www.shieldthevulnerable.org)

How do we do background checks?

The standard background screening method for all adults working with children is the Live Scan fingerprinting process. Live Scan applications are obtained from your parish Safe Environment Coordinator or Custodian of Records. Follow their instructions. In the case of volunteer applicants who do not possess a government issued photo I.D., they may be screened by name and date of birth through ScreeningOne Background Screening Services.

What are the components of Safe Environment training for adults working with children and youth?

After participating in Safe Environment training, each adults should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the issue of child abuse and the *Charter*
- Define child abuse
- Recognize signs of possible abuse in a child/youth
- Recognize possible “grooming” behavior in a perpetrator
- Respond appropriately to a child/adolescent who may have suffered abuse in order to provide help
- Be familiar with reporting laws and report suspicions of abuse to the appropriate authorities/agencies

How often must adults be trained?

Adults must have Safe Environment training every 3 years. Adults may participate in live training at the parish or diocesan level, or take the online course from www.shieldthevulnerable.org.

What are the components of Safe Environment training for youth?

Safe Environment training for youth should include age appropriate materials pertaining to personal safety that conforms to Catholic teaching. After participating in Safe Environment Training, students will:

- Recognize that they are individuals created by God with unique gifts and talents.
- Realize that we are made to live in community in positive relationships
- Recognize the influence of peer pressure, both positive and negative
- Recognize both proper and improper relationships with adults and be aware of personal boundaries
- Become aware of the many forms of harassment
- Become aware of the negative consequences of violence
- Become aware of sexual violence, especially in dating relationships

- Recognize that running away is not a good option and runaways are especially at risk for abuse
- Understand the impact of communications technology, the appropriate use of social media
- Recognize grooming behavior
- Recognize indicators of abuse in others
- Become aware of how to report and get help for themselves or someone else

How often must youth be trained?

Safe Environment training must be offered to all youth every year.

What are some specific materials to be used?

Effective programs will be a combination of repetition and new material. The particular content and delivery can be varied by:

- Offering the Basic initial safety lessons: *For What It's Worth, Safe Environment, Healthy Relationships, or Healthy, Happy, and Holy*, coupled with the take home brochure, *Boundaries, A Guide for Teens*.
- Showing the DVD "Breaking the Silence" initially and using the facilitator guide
- Focusing on individual segments of "Breaking the Silence" and expanding each topic with supplemental material.
- Inviting approved outside speakers on the various components (see approved speaker list)
- Presenting the NetSmartz *Internet Safety for Teens Course* www.NetSmartz.org/Presentations
- Other training materials as approved by the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

How do I verify that the youth of my parish have had Safe Environment training?

Every Youth Minister and Confirmation Coordinator is responsible for submitting a report to your parish Director of Faith Formation (DRE) by mid-January of each year with the following information: total number of students, total number of youth/students trained and total number of students who may have opted out.

As well as and in addition to; submitting the *Safe Environment Safety Training Report* to the Office of Child and Youth Protection by April 15th of each year.

What about students who come in mid-year or miss the SE training?

One make-up session should be provided for all those who did not receive training.

Where do I find more answers and resources regarding Child and Youth Protection?

www.rcbo.org/childandyouthprotection/resources

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