

Child Abuse Prevention Training for Adults

Safe Environment Training for Adults

What is required of volunteers and employees?

Our diocesan policies are rooted in the Catholic understanding that each individual must be respected and honored. Just as Jesus had a deep, abiding respect for each human being and would not harm or mislead anyone in their personal or spiritual life, we must attempt to do likewise. Our policies cover four areas of possible harm: immoral conduct, exploitation, harassment and abuse.

Specifically regarding prevention of abuse, the policies require anyone involved in a ministry with minors (those under the age of 18) or vulnerable adults (those who are uniquely vulnerable to abuse because of physical or mental disabilities) to:

1. Agree to a criminal background check;
2. Attend a “Safe Environment” training, a seminar on identifying and responding to child sexual abuse;
3. Commit to the conduct identified in the Code of Conduct.

What is the definition of someone “involved in a ministry with minors or vulnerable adults?”

Although this is not a complete list, at a minimum the following areas must comply with this policy:

- Clergy (priests and deacons)
- Women and men in consecrated life
- Seminarians and deacon candidates
- Paid diocese and parish staff
- Directors of religious education and catechists
- Youth ministry employees and volunteers
- School administrators, teachers and classroom volunteers
- Maintenance and food service providers in schools and parishes
- Leaders and volunteers of Catholic Boy and Girl Scout troops
- Leaders and volunteers of CYO sports organizations
- Children’s choir directors and children’s liturgy coordinators and trainers
- Adults involved in overnight events with children and youth
- Adults transporting minors in vehicles and chaperoning youth activities
- Adults involved in a one-on-one or home-based ministry with minors
- Eucharistic ministers who visit people outside of the church (hospitals, nursing homes, private homes, etc.)
- Adults serving in a program for minors or vulnerable adults that is hosted on church or school property
- Older teens who have a position of responsibility in assisting with youth programs.

What does the “Safe Environment” training entail?

In 2015 “Protecting Our Children” training sessions will continue to be held throughout the Diocese by parish Child Advocates and other trained facilitators. The training includes the following:

- A DVD presentation and discussion that deepens participants’ awareness of how child sexual abuse can occur and how adults can identify and interrupt boundary violations before they lead to abusive situations. Participants are given the opportunity to discuss their emotions, concerns and questions in a facilitated discussion following the presentation. The presentation includes essential information about background checks, appropriate interactions with children and other adults, identifying signs of possible child abuse and provides resources for adults who may suspect a child is being abused. Information about reporting abuse and additional resources for church personnel, parents and families are provided.

Where and when are training sessions held?

To obtain a schedule of training sessions for the Diocese of Springfield, call your parish Child Advocate, or call the Office of Counseling, Prevention and Victim Services at (413) 452-0624 or e-mail p.mcmanamy@diospringfield.org.

New “Safe and Sacred” training for adults coming in 2016

The Diocese of Springfield is updating our *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*, our *Code of Conduct*, and our training process for adults in all areas of ministry.

The new “Safe and Sacred” training stems from an online education format which will increase the consistency, effectiveness and convenience of our child protection education and actions, as well as in the tasks of record-keeping and reporting. A tutorial in how to set up and document the training for parish and school coordinators will be created for Child Advocates and training facilitators, and quarterly newsletters will include updates and review of child protection skills..

Over the course of three years, individuals will increase their awareness and actions on the following themes:

The new program will include:

- Identifying and responding to child abuse,
- Enriched awareness of boundaries and interactions with youth in our ministries,
- Spanish-language and Vietnamese-language materials,
- Beyond the “Code of Conduct”: contemplation of ethics and professional boundaries,
- Identifying and responding to elder abuse for Eucharistic Ministers and those in ministry with vulnerable populations.

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