



DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD – CAPE GIRARDEAU

Safe Environment Instructions – 2017

Diocesan Policies, Guidelines and Procedures Book Update **NEW!**

The diocesan policy book was updated July 2017 with significant changes in [Safe Environment Procedures](#) and includes with the [Guidelines for the Use of Technology, Email and Social Media](#).

New employees and volunteers

When a new employee or volunteer goes to www.VIRTUS.org, they register for a VIRTUS training, fill out background check information, read and acknowledge the Code of Conduct, and answer the background screening questionnaire. The parish or school faxes the Background Disclosure and Authorization (Appendix B1) to the Diocese at 888-820-6032. The Diocese will review the answers to the background screening questionnaire. If any answer is of concern, the pastor or principal will be contacted immediately.

If your location needs a VIRTUS training, contact the Diocese.

Administrator Checklist for New Employees and Volunteers:

- ✓ 2017 Code of Conduct, Appendix A1 (a blank copy for them to keep)
[English](#) [Spanish](#)
- ✓ Background Disclosure and Authorization, Appendix B1 (legibly completed, signed and faxed by parish or school to 888-820-6032) [English](#) [Spanish](#)
- ✓ Summary of Rights, Appendix B2 (a copy for them to keep)
- ✓ Assist employee or volunteer in registering and completing forms online at www.VIRTUS.org, if necessary

New Employee or Volunteer Checklist:

1. Go to www.VIRTUS.org. Register for VIRTUS training, read and acknowledge the Code of Conduct, answer the Background Questionnaire, and complete Background Check information. Your supervisor will assist you, if necessary.
2. Attend a VIRTUS training. Be sure to sign the attendance form at the meeting, and be present for the entire workshop.
3. Obtain from your supervisor or the VIRTUS training workshop a copy of the *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Adult Volunteers Working with Minors*. Re-read and keep a copy for future reference.
4. Carefully and legibly complete the *Background Disclosure and Authorization*. Give to your supervisor.
5. Obtain a copy of *Summary of Rights* from your supervisor.
6. Employees are to read monthly training bulletins by logging on to their VIRTUS accounts.

Current employees (including clergy)

Current diocesan, parish and school employees, and priests and deacons in ministry, are to log on to their VIRTUS accounts and read and acknowledge the *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Adult Volunteers Working with Minors* each Fall. The link is found in yellow in the upper left hand corner of the page after log in. Employees who are unable to log on to their VIRTUS accounts should contact the local safe environment coordinator. Retired priests in ministry can sign a paper copy obtained from a parish, or will receive a paper copy from the Diocese in the mail, which is to be returned to the Diocese. Local safe environment coordinators can view an individual's account and see if the Code and questionnaire has been acknowledged by clicking "required documents." Employees and clergy are also required to read the monthly bulletins. Employees and clergy should use this opportunity to catch up on any missed bulletins and update account information.

Current volunteers

Current volunteers are also required to review and sign the **Code of Conduct and complete the Background Questionnaire** (on page 4 of the Code) annually. The *signature page only* is to be faxed to the Diocese at 888-820-6032, or mailed. If a volunteer knows how to log on to their VIRTUS account, he/she should read and acknowledge the Code of Conduct online. The parish or school is to retain the signature page of the Code of Conduct (if not signed online) until the record appears on the volunteer's VIRTUS account in the required documents tab. Then the Code may be discarded.

Note to Pastors and Principals

Visiting Clergy: Any clergy not incardinated in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau who will minister in your parish or school must first receive faculties from the Bishop. Contact Fr. Reidy at the Diocese Office.

Sex Offenders: If you become aware of a registered sex offender who is attending Mass or activities in your parish or school, contact the Diocese immediately to work out a safety plan. The Mass Attendance Agreement should be used after consultation with the Diocese.

VIRTUS Lessons for 2017-2018 School Year

Lesson 2 is to be taught by during the 2017-2018 school year. Please note that the lesson has enough material that it can be split into two sessions. It is suggested that Lesson 2 is taught before December 16, 2017 and during the spring, review Lesson 2 with the children and include activities not covered during the fall session. The second part should be completed by March 16, 2018. The lessons are required for each child in Kindergarten through 12th grade who attends Catholic School or any parish religious education class. See next item for High School students. VIRTUS lessons are available to those who have the "Educator" tab on their VIRTUS accounts. If you need help with the VIRTUS lessons for children contact the Diocese. The lessons are new. Please destroy copies of previous lessons. Principals and Parish Catechetical leaders should insure teachers and catechists use the new lessons this year.

Optional VIRTUS lesson for Teens

November 2013 the Diocese introduced a new lesson for Safe Environment Training for teens. *Protecting God's Children- Healthy Choices for Teens* is a series of vignettes, which the catechist discusses with students using a study guide. Parishes and schools may opt to use the new DVD instead of the regular lessons. The DVD must be used with the lesson plan, and not just viewed by students without a discussion. As always with any media, preview the DVD to make sure it works correctly and plan the most appropriate way to use in your local community. Each Catholic high school and parish with a religious education program received a copy of the DVD and lessons. The lessons are also available to those with the "Educator" tab on the VIRTUS website. Choose lessons for grades 9-12, and then print lessons 9 and 10. For additional copies of the DVD, contact the Diocese. Parishes and schools should also use the regular VIRTUS lessons in rotation with the *Healthy Choices* DVD.

Statement for Parish and School handbooks or parent information

The following statement is to be included in parish and school handbooks or parent communications each school year. If you have not already communicated similar information for the current academic year, please print in the parish bulletin. Parishes and schools are **not** to send a permission form or special letter to parents regarding the safe environment lessons. The opt out form is **not** to be automatically sent home each year. It is used only if a parent tells the parish they do not want their child trained, and after a parent has reviewed the lessons and spoken to the pastor about why they do not want their child trained. This announcement may be adapted to fit your parish or school situation.

The Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau is committed to helping children learn and grow in a healthy and safe environment. _____ Parish (School) complies with diocesan safe environment policies and procedures.

In accordance with the U.S. Bishop's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the program *Protecting God's Children – Teaching Touching Safety* (commonly referred to as "VIRTUS") is used in the Diocese. Students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade participate in two safety lessons each school year; one in the fall and one in the spring.

The safe environment policy of the Diocese includes training in how to recognize, prevent and report abuse. All employees, and volunteers who regularly work with minors, receive this initial training, as well as ongoing training and background screening. The *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Adult Volunteers Working with Minors* as well as the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* are available at the diocesan website, www.dioscg.org. An overview of the children's training is also available on the diocesan website. You may view copies of these documents as well as the children's lessons for this school year at the office.

We are happy to partner with you in working to keep your child safe. Children are truly God's gifts to all of us!

Report of Completion

The report is due April 15 each year. Every parish, mission and school is required to submit the form with the pastor's signature, even if there are no religious education classes held at your location. This form is to be included with a list of employees and volunteers. See next item.

Spreadsheet for recording Employees and Volunteers

This list is to be maintained for each audit year (July 1-June 30) and a copy emailed to the Diocese for verification. First record the names of your employees and volunteers, **then** go to the VIRTUS database to verify compliance. Auditors may ask to see this list. Note that the names of persons employed, and volunteers who have contact with children anytime during the audit year are to be recorded. **Do not** list everyone who has had a background check or been VIRTUS trained at your location. **Do not** submit a master report from the VIRTUS website. Obtain the template from Rosie Francka at the diocesan office.

Local Safe Environment Coordinators

Each school and parish is to have a Safe Environment Coordinator appointed by the pastor. In some cases, there is one coordinator for the both the school and parish. This person is responsible for maintaining the safe environment records and assuring compliance with diocesan policy. Before the coordinator assumes this role, he/she is trained by the Diocese. See the enclosed list of trained local coordinators. If there are any corrections, or a local coordinator needs help, please notify the Diocese immediately.

Annual Safe Environment bulletin/newsletter announcement

The following text is to be printed in the parish and school bulletin or newsletter by December 31, annually. Keep a copy of the bulletin in the safe environment file. Parishes are encouraged to print this announcement regularly during the year.

To report suspected child abuse call the **Missouri Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-392-3738**.

To report **violations** of the *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Adult Volunteers Working with Minors* to the Chancellor, Fr. Tom Reidy at 417-866-0841 or treidy@dioscg.org; or a Victim Assistance Coordinator: Judy St. John, LPC, NCC at 573-587-3139 or vac1@dioscg.org. **Concerns** may be discussed with your supervisor; a Victim Assistance Coordinator; William Holtmeyer, Jr., MS, NCC, LPC, CEAP, Director, Office of Child and Youth Protection at 417-866-0841 or billholtmeyer@dioscg.org; or the Chancellor. The TIPS reporting system may also be used by clicking the link on the diocesan website, www.dioscg.org, or the parish or school website.

Go to www.dioscg.org to view the *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Adult Volunteers Working with Minors* and for other important information, including a link to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops's document, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. If you are unable to access the website or desire printed information, contact the diocesan office at 417-866-0841.

TIPS incident reporting system

TIPS is a reporting system used to enhance efforts to prevent harm to children and assist with recordkeeping. This reporting system is also useful for a variety of risk management situations, and furthers the diocesan efforts for accountability. Bishop has asked that parishes and schools add the TIPS logo and link to their website. Contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection for information.

Scouts

If a parish charters a Boy or Girl Scout troop, or similar group, the parish is responsible for that troop. Therefore, leaders need to comply with diocesan safe environment policy, even if they are not parishioners. Compliance includes attending a VIRTUS training, background screening, and signing the Code of Conduct. This is in addition to whatever the scout organization requires. Parishes may ask the scout leaders to reimburse the parish for the cost of the background check. Scout Leaders are volunteers and are not required to read monthly bulletins.

Knights of Columbus

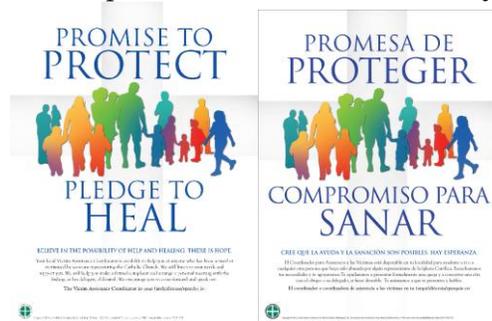
Knights of Columbus members are required to be in compliance with diocesan safe environment policy. Each Knight should follow the same procedures as a parish volunteer: VIRTUS training, background check and an annual Code of Conduct.

Minors who work with other Minors

Appendix A2, *Code of Conduct for minors in Grades Seven through Twelve*, is included in the diocesan policy book. It is to be used for Camp Re-New-All volunteers under age 18, and may be used for other diocesan and parish activities where minors in grades seven through twelve have regular contact with other minors. Other examples include parish child care, Vacation Bible School, and parish religious education programs. Catholic schools are not required to use this form, but may choose to do so. The form is intended as an educational tool for teens and their families. Note: The form is to be sent home to parents to review and sign with their child. Do not give the form directly to the teen.

Safe Environment Posters

Each parish and school is to prominently display, in public gathering areas, a poster distributed by the diocesan office. Contact the office for more stickers and additional posters. This is a mandatory requirement.



Spanish Language resources

New employees and volunteers can go to www.VIRTUS.org to complete registration and forms in Spanish. Click [Español](#) on the left side of the page. Spanish language trainings are available also upon request from the Diocese.

Vietnamese Language resources

A limited number of resources are available in Vietnamese, including the VIRTUS adult training. Contact the Diocese for assistance.

Other Languages

If there is a need for resources or trainings in other languages, please notify the Diocese.