



Safe Environment Instructions Office of Child and Youth Protection Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau July 2016

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

The diocesan policy book was updated March 2016 with significant changes in "[Safe Environment Procedures](#)", and with the new "[Guidelines for Interactions through Technology](#)."

2016-17 Code of Conduct **NEW!**

The 2016-17 [Code of Conduct](#) is available on the diocesan website and on the Virtus website. See instructions below. The Code is signed annually.

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:

- ✓ [2016-17 Code of Conduct](#), Appendix A1 (a blank copy for them to keep) [Spanish](#)
- ✓ [Background Disclosure and Authorization](#), Appendix B1 (legibly completed, signed and faxed by parish or school to 888-820-6032) [Spanish](#)
- ✓ [Summary of Rights](#), Appendix B2 (a copy for them to keep) [Spanish](#)
- ✓ Assist employee or volunteer in registering and completing forms online at www.virtus.org, if necessary

New Employee or Volunteer Checklist:

Step 1: Go to www.virtus.org, register for a Virtus training, sign the *Code of Conduct*, answer the *Background Questionnaire*, and submit the background check information.

Step 2: Legibly complete and sign the *Background Disclosure and Authorization Form* (Appendix B1) [English](#) [Spanish](#) and give to your supervisor. Appendix B1 is faxed to the Office of Child and Youth Protection **by the parish or school**: 888-820-6032.

Step 3: Retain the *Summary of Rights* [English](#) [Spanish](#) and *Code of Conduct* [English](#) [Spanish](#) for your information.

Step 4: Attend the Virtus training. Be sure to sign the attendance form at your training, and be present for the entire workshop to receive credit for attending.

Step 5 : 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](#) each year **after July 1**. 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 sign the [Code of Conduct](#) 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.

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. Use the *Sex Offender Mass Attendance Agreement* after consultation with the diocese.

Virtus Lessons for 2016-17 School Year **NEW!**

Lesson 1 is to be taught by December 2016 and Lesson 2 is to be taught by March 2017. 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. Destroy copies of previous lessons. Principals and parish catechetical leaders need to make sure 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 this 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.

Safe Environment Audit List 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 (Excel spreadsheet) from Ken Pesek at the diocesan office or from the diocesan website, Office of Child and Youth Protection.

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, and send a copy of the parish bulletin to the diocese. Parishes are encouraged to print this announcement regularly during the year.

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

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; or William J. Holtmeyer, Jr., MS, NCC, LPC, CEAP, Q-SAP at 417-860-3858 or vac2@dioscg.org. **Concerns** may be discussed with your supervisor; a Victim Assistance Coordinator; Karen Pesek, director, Office of Child and Youth Protection at 417-866-0841 or kpesek@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 Bishop'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.

What to keep on file (must be able to access for audit) **New!**

Parishes and schools retain the following documents in a permanent, fire proof, locked location:

1. Any old background checks (Highway Patrol).
2. Appendix B1, Background Disclosure and Authorization forms (filled out and signed) AFTER sending to the diocese and verifying the background check is complete on the individual's Virtus account.
3. Report of Completion. A copy sent to the diocese by April 15 annually.
4. Opt Out forms completed by the parent and pastor. A copy is sent to the diocese.
5. Letters of suitability for visiting clergy. A copy is also sent to the diocese.
6. Sex offender Mass Agreements and safety plans.

Parishes and schools retain the following documents for at least two years:

1. Bulletins and/or newsletters published with "How to Report" (see above)
2. Bulletins published with Virtus monthly training information.
3. Spreadsheet with list of employees, and a list of volunteers who have regular contact with children for the audit year. (July 1-June 30) A copy is sent to the diocese by April 15 annually, with Report of Completion.

Opting Out of the Children's Safe Environment Lessons

The Bishops of the United States require all children in Catholic Schools and parish religious education programs in grades Kindergarten through Twelve be taught personal safety lessons provided by the diocese. This diocese uses a Catholic program with eight age appropriate lessons taught on a rotating basis. These lessons are approved by Bishop. A parent may "opt out" of the twice annual safe environment lessons for their child. In order to do so, the parent is to have a conference with the pastor in which the reasons for choosing not to participate are discussed. The lessons are to be offered to the parent to review, and if the parent chooses, to teach to the child at home. If the parent still does not want to allow the child to participate, they are to sign the [Opt Out Form](#). A copy is sent to the diocese and the original retained permanently at the parish. If a parent refuses to sign the Opt Out Form, the pastor indicates this on the form, signs it, retains the original permanently at the parish, and sends a copy to the diocese. Since the lessons are part of the regular curriculum, do not send permission forms home for the parents to sign. Parishes and schools are to inform the parents of the diocesan policy through the handbook or registration materials. See above "Statement for Parish and School Handbooks or Parent Information."

Parent Education **NEW!**

In addition to the monthly Virtus training parishes and schools include in bulletins and newsletters, there are two other resources provided by the diocese. It is recommended that upon initial enrollment families receive the “[Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Guide for Caring Parents, Adults and Guardians Booklet \(Spanish\)](#).” This is available free of charge from the diocese. The “[Teaching Touching Safety brochure \(Spanish\)](#)” should be given to each family annually. Parishes and schools may print this themselves, or request copies from the diocese.

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 annually. 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.

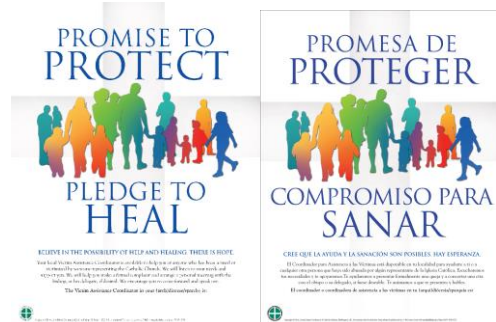
See numbers 1, 20-22: the [Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Programs FAQ](#)

Minors who work with other Minors

Appendix A2, [Code of Conduct for minors in Grades Seven through Twelve](#), (Spanish), 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.