



## POLICY REGARDING SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Introduction

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has created a safe environment training program for all children enrolled in its diocesan schools and parish religious education programs. The diocese established this important program to fulfill one of the mandates of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Article 12 of the *Charter* reads, "Dioceses ...are to maintain "safe environment" programs...to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people."

### Policy

Each parish which offers a religious education to children must include the safe environment training for all children who participate. This requirement exists regardless of the structure of the religious education program, for example, classroom instruction, family-based catechesis, or others. All schools of the diocese, including, parish-based preschools, must provide the training to the children enrolled in the school.

The training program for children requires instruction every year. Pastors/school principals shall ensure that this requirement is met each year. They may delegate the responsibility to their Director of Religious Education (DRE) or another staff member. The approved training materials provided by the diocese must be used to present the training. No substitutions of other materials are permitted. However, parishes and school may supplement the training with materials that the pastor and principal (if applicable) deem appropriate. Training must be offered in the parish/school setting by a specially trained adult. See the next section for more information as to who may present the training.

### Implementation

The parish or school will give notice to the parents and guardians of children who are enrolled that the training will take place. They must do so with ample time for the parents to review the training material if they desire. Training should take place soon after the beginning of the school year to ensure children have this important information when present at the parish or school.

Parents who refuse to allow their children to participate must complete a **Parent Refusal Form** each year. The school/parish is to keep the forms on file and to provide copies of the teaching material to the parents and request that they instruct their child (ren) at home.

**Absent Students** should attend a make-up session or take the training material home with them. A note should accompany the child asking the parents to review the material with their child. The parish/school may ask the parent to return a signed form stating that they did review the material with their child (ren). This is not required but may help reinforce the idea that the material is important.

The pastor or school principal may choose whomever they feel is the best instructor(s) for the training sessions. Some obvious choices are: the classroom teacher, catechist, school counselor, DRE, or principal. Others could be a volunteer with a counseling, social work or similar background. The pastor or principal must ensure the presenter is trained to present the material and has completed the Safe Environment requirements for adults who have contact with minors. To assure that Safe Environment training is presented in the most uniform and comprehensive way possible and to verify that every student receives the training, it must be given on parish/school grounds by the designated adult.

The parish or school will complete a report on the training of the children every year. The diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator will send the form and instructions for completion of the report to the parish or school and collect them every year.