

SAFE ENVIRONMENT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR THE ARCHDIOCES OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

SECTION I - SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM COMPONENTS

A. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Articles 12 and 13 of the U.S. Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People mandate that each Diocese implement a safe environment program. The required components of the safe environment program include training on the issues of child sexual abuse awareness and prevention, published standards of conduct for clergy and all personnel working with children and youth, as well as background evaluations. The safe environment program currently being implemented in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston incorporates each of these components.

1. **Training**

Mandatory Attendance - VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children for Adults Workshop:

- All active priests and permanent deacons
- All seminarians
- All employees of the Diocese, including parishes and schools, regardless of position, ministry, part-time or full-time status
- All volunteers having regular contact with children or youth*
- All volunteers who will attending an overnight function with children or youth.

Review of Periodic Training Bulletins at VIRTUS® Online Website:

- All active priests and permanent deacons
- Principals
- Parish employees/volunteers in leadership positions for ministries involving children & youth, i.e. Youth Ministers, Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education, Directors of Early Childhood Centers, Parish Nursery Coordinators, Family Life Ministers, Directors/Coordinators of Sacramental Preparation, etc.
- Pastoral Associates/Parish Administrators
- VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Workshop Facilitators
- Parish Safe Environment Coordinators

2. **Standards of Conduct**

Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies:

- All clergy (priests and deacons)
- All Chancery employees
- All parish employees
- All school employees

Volunteer Code of Conduct:

- All volunteers having regular contact with children or youth

3. **Background Evaluations**

Criminal Background Checks:

- All clergy (priests and deacons)
- All seminarians
- All parish employees
- All school employees
- All volunteers having regular contact with children or youth

Application for Volunteer Service:

- All volunteers having regular contact with children or youth*

**Volunteers having regular contact with children or youth are defined as those whose participation is "frequent, routine or ongoing"*

B. TRAINING

1. **VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children for Adults Workshop**

The VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children for Adults Workshop is a 3-hour session including 2 videos and facilitated discussions focusing on the prevention of abuse and the protection of children. Participants learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms that an adult is a potential risk of harm to children and how to know that a child is being abused or exploited in some way. In addition, they will learn about steps that the faith community can take to create a safe environment for all God's children and how to respond when adults behave in a way that raises concerns.

2. **Workshop Schedule & Registration**

The workshops are scheduled monthly at various parishes and locations across the Archdiocese. In order to attend a workshop, participants must **pre-register** at the VIRTUS® website (*see below*).

To view a schedule of upcoming workshops and pre-register:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Click on the yellow "Registration" link in the left margin
- Select 2nd item – View a list of sessions
- Select your organization – "Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston"
- View available sessions then click "Begin Registration" at the top of the page

OR

- Go to www.archgh.org
- Click on the "What Department Are You Looking For?" – top right hand corner of Archdiocesan homepage
- Select "Safe Environment Program (VIRTUS®)"
- Select VIRTUS Workshop Schedule & Registration
- View available sessions then click "Begin Registration" at the top of the page

3. Verification of Attendance at VIRTUS Workshop - Through Local Safe Environment Program Coordinator

An individual's attendance should be verified through the Parish/School Safe Environment Program Coordinator. All local coordinators with access to the Internet are authorized to view and print the list of workshop attendees who have identified themselves as either employees or volunteers of a particular location, including those attending the training outside of their home parish or school.

4. Requests for Written Confirmation of VIRTUS Training

All individual requests for written confirmation of VIRTUS training will be referred to either the VIRTUS website or their Parish Safe Environment Program Coordinator for assistance. Any individual that pre-registered themselves at the VIRTUS website to attend the training may return to the website to view and print their training record by entering the user I.D. and password they selected when registering. If the individual has forgotten their user I.D. and password, the VIRTUS online system will email it to them directly. However, if the individual did not pre-register themselves, they must consult their Parish/School Safe Environment Program Coordinator for assistance.

5. Periodic Training Bulletins at VIRTUS Website

The VIRTUS organization posts new training bulletins twice monthly at the VIRTUS website. The bulletins are divided into three main categories:

Protecting God's Children for Adults
Best Management Practices
Protecting God's Children for Facilitators

6. Protecting God's Children for Adults Training Bulletins

These articles are designed to renew and broaden a person's awareness and knowledge of child abuse prevention. Pursuant to Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza's Memorandum dated March 18, 2003 outlining the VIRTUS Program, the following individuals are required to review this specific category of online training bulletins:

- **All active priests and permanent deacons**
- **Principals**
- **Parish employees in leadership positions for ministries to children and youth, i.e.**
 - **Directors/coordinators of youth ministry**
 - **Directors/coordinators of religious education**
 - **Directors of early childhood centers**
 - **Coordinators of parish nurseries**
 - **Family life ministers**
 - **Directors/coordinators of sacramental preparation**

As of March, 2003 the following are also required to review this category of bulletins:

- **Family life ministers**
- **Directors/coordinators of sacramental preparation**
- **Pastoral Associates**
- **Parish Administrators**
- **Parish Safe Environment Program Coordinators.**

7. Best Management Practices Training Bulletins

These articles are designed to increase awareness and knowledge regarding workplace issues. They are a very helpful resource and are strongly **recommended** for those individuals whose positions involve supervising other employees, i.e. priests, pastoral associates, parish administrators, principals, etc.

8. Protecting God's Children for Facilitators Training Bulletins

These articles are designed exclusively to assist Protecting God's Children Workshop Facilitators in improving their workshop presentation. Facilitators are the only individuals **required** to review this category of training bulletins.

9. Accessing VIRTUS Online Training Bulletins

Individuals required to review the periodic training bulletins at the VIRTUS website should receive an email notification when new training bulletins have been posted, including direct link to the VIRTUS website. However, in some instances these emails are caught by spam filters. Not receiving the reminder emails does not mean that the individuals are not still required to read the bulletins. Please follow these instructions in order to access the new bulletins:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Enter the user I.D. and password you selected
- Select "My Training" tab
- See "Training Bulletins" in the left margin
- Click on the Category of Training Bulletin you wish to view
- Answer Question(s) at Conclusion of Bulletin (*to receive credit for completion*)

Individuals experiencing difficulty viewing the online training bulletins or receiving credit for completion after viewing an article should contact VIRTUS directly for assistance:

Helpdesk@virtus.org

Toll Free: 1-888-847-8870

C. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

1. Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies

Effective October 1, 1990, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston established Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies to set forth basic standards of ethical behavior and personal conduct for all personnel associated with the Archdiocese and its parishes, schools and other affiliated organizations. All employees, both existing and those newly hired should receive a copy of this policy and complete three (3) forms necessary for compliance:

- Acknowledgment Form
- Informational Questionnaire
- Release of Information Form

Completed forms are to be retained in the employee's personnel file.

2. Volunteer Code of Conduct

Effective March 18, 2003, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston established a Code of Conduct to set forth basic standards of conduct for all volunteers having regular contact with children and youth. The standards provided in the Code of Conduct are mandatory; therefore, the form may not be altered in any way by the volunteer. Each volunteer must submit the signed form to the Parish Safe Environment Program Coordinator for forwarding to the Archdiocese. The Volunteer Code of Conduct is in lieu of the Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policy signed by employees.

D. BACKGROUND EVALUATIONS

1. Criminal Background Clearance Procedure

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston currently contracts with a reputable background check company affiliated with the NAPBS (National Association of Professional Background Screeners) to perform criminal background checks on employees, all parish and school personnel, and volunteers having regular contact with children or youth, in order to fulfill the requirements of the Charter.

2. Social Security Verification and National Criminal Index Scan

The criminal history checks involve a two step process:

- Step 1 - Social Security Verification

This check assists us in matching the individual's name and their social security number, as well as provides the individual's recent address history.

- Step 2 - National Criminal Index Check

This database contains criminal records from 41 states across the U.S., including sex offender registries, from 39 of the 41 states. If an individual's address history reflects that they have resided in one of the states not reporting to National Criminal Index scan, then we have the ability through our vendor to perform a statewide and/or county check in the jurisdiction where they previously resided.

3. Refusal to Complete Background Check Authorization Form

As demonstrated above, our ability to perform a thorough criminal background check on an employee or volunteer having regular contact with children or youth is conditioned upon having complete information. Refusal to fully complete the criminal background check authorization form in its entirety is considered

grounds for immediate termination of individual's employment and/or volunteer service. Any incomplete forms received omitting specific information, i.e. date of birth and social security numbers, will be returned to the Parish Safe Environment Program Coordinator with a request to resubmit the form when it is fully completed. Also, any forms received that have been altered by the volunteer or employee, i.e. crossing through portion of the document, shall also be returned to the Parish Safe Environment Program Coordinator.

4. Volunteers Without Social Security Number

Volunteers having regular contact with children/youth who do not possess a social security number may only volunteer if the following conditions are met:

- Volunteer completes criminal background check authorization form including date of birth;
- Volunteer successfully clears a check of the National Criminal Index scan database and County of residence;
- Volunteer has been stable and active in the parish for a minimum of three (3) years; and
- Volunteer is not allowed to volunteer with children or youth without supervision of second adult in full compliance with VIRTUS requirements, including complete background clearance.

The ministry leader responsible for the volunteer should submit a letter confirming that requirements 3 and 4 provided above have been met. The letter should accompany the completed background check authorization form when it is submitted to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Coordinator.

5. Criminal History Reports

If an individual employee or volunteer has a criminal history, the determination as to whether the offense will prevent the individual from being employed and/or from engaging in volunteer service with children or youth will be made on a case by case basis considering several factors. Those factors include the type of offense, time lapse since offense was committed, the individual's criminal history in the intervening time period, the facts and circumstances surrounding the criminal offense, etc.

6. Notification of Non-clearance

When an individual's criminal history excludes them from employment and/or volunteer service with children or youth, their Pastor will receive notification from Legal Services that the individual has not cleared the criminal background check. The notification will **not** include any specific information regarding the criminal offense. In the case of an employee, the Pastor shall notify the individual directly of their non-clearance. In the case of a volunteer, the Pastor shall notify the ministry leader of the non-clearance and that the individual is prohibited from volunteer service with children or youth. The ministry leader shall communicate the non-clearance to the volunteer.

7. Application for Volunteer Service

All new volunteers having regular contact with children or youth are required to complete an Application for Volunteer Service and submit it to the ministry leader of the program for which the volunteer is seeking to serve. The ministry leader should thoroughly review the volunteer's application form for suitability in their particular ministry and check the references provided by the applicant prior to acceptance. The Application form should be retained on file at the parish. Do not send to Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office.

E. COMPLIANCE – NEW EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1. New Employees in Leadership Positions in Ministries Involving Children & Youth as a Condition of Employment:

- Must attend VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop within thirty (30) days of hire
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Must agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies
- Must review periodic online training bulletins at the VIRTUS website following attendance at the VIRTUS Workshop

2. New Employees in Other Positions/Ministries Not Involving Regular Contact with Children & Youth as a Condition of Employment:

- Must attend VIRTUS Protecting God's Workshop within sixty (60) days of hire
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies

3. New Volunteers in Leadership Positions in Ministries Involving Regular Contact with Children & Youth Prior to Engaging in Volunteer Service:

- Must attend VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop
- Must complete the Application for Volunteer Service
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Must review periodic online training bulletins at the VIRTUS website following attendance at the VIRTUS Workshop
- Must agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Volunteer Code of Conduct

4. New Volunteers in Non-Leadership Positions in Ministries Involving Regular Contact with Children & Youth Prior to Engaging in Volunteer Service:

- Must attend VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop
- Must complete the Application for Volunteer Service
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Must agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Volunteer Code of Conduct

F. VIRTUS® WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston will hold an annual training session for new VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop Facilitators. Volunteers interested in being trained as a Facilitator should complete the Facilitator Application form and submit it to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Coordinator for consideration. Excellent candidates are those possessing strong verbal skills, with experience speaking before groups and time to make a commitment to presenting workshops in their home parish, but also other parishes within the same deanery.

G. DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT ARCHDIOCESAN WEBSITE

The following is a list of Safe Environment Program documents which may be viewed and downloaded from the Archdiocesan website (go to www.archgh.org and select “Administrative Depts” followed by “Safe Environment Program” on the left hand side of the page):

- Archdiocesan Policy for Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor
- Criminal Background Check Authorization
- Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Application for Volunteer Service
- Parental Consent Form
- VIRTUS Workshop Facilitator Application

SECTION II – SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A. PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office

The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program (VIRTUS) Office maintains responsibility for the daily implementation of the Program, including, but not limited to, the following tasks:

- Scheduling Facilitators to present VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children for Adults Workshops;
- Approving VIRTUS training records
- Maintaining databases of VIRTUS training records & criminal background checks;
- Performing staff and volunteer criminal background checks;
- Maintaining Safe Environment Program files for each Archdiocesan entity (background check authorization forms, reports and volunteer codes of conduct); and
- Scheduling training for new Parish Safe Environment Program Coordinators and Coordinators.

2. Parish Safe Environment Program (VIRTUS) Coordinator

Parish Safe Environment Coordinators are responsible for implementation of the Safe Environment Program at the parish level and ensuring compliance by all parish personnel. The term parish personnel is defined as "all parish employees and those volunteers having regular contact with children and youth". The following is a list of general tasks:

- Identify by name all parish personnel and submit list to Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator annually;
- Forward signed Volunteer Codes of Conduct and Background Check Authorizations to Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator;
- Schedule Protecting God's Children Workshop(s) at parish site to accommodate staff, volunteers and parents;
- Distribute periodic VIRTUS online training bulletins to employees without internet access; and
- Submit updated list of parish personnel to Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator on an annual basis.

3. School Principals

With regard to parochial and Archdiocesan regional schools, the Principals or his or her representative serves as the local Safe Environment Coordinators for those sites. They will have the same responsibilities as those cited above for the Parish Safe Environment Coordinators, with the exception of scheduling workshops. Principals are to work closely with the Parish Safe Environment Coordinators to ensure that workshops are scheduled to accommodate the school’s staff, volunteers and parents. (Non-parish affiliated schools may schedule one individual session per year, which MUST be open to outside participants.)

B. HOSTING VIRTUS® PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN FOR ADULTS WORKSHOPS

Trained VIRTUS® Workshop Facilitators are available to present the Workshop at parishes within their Deanery, and several have committed to present the Workshop anywhere in the Archdiocese.

All Workshops that are scheduled will be posted at www.virtus.org and may be viewed by clicking on the yellow Registration link in the left margin and selecting the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

In parishes where there are a significant number of employees and volunteers, the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator should request that a Workshop be presented at the parish. Sessions will not be limited to participants from a specific location. (All sessions will be open to all employees, volunteers and parishioners of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston)

1. Scheduling A Workshop - Determine Available Date(s) & Submit Request

- After the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator has consulted with the pastor and determined available dates on the parish and ministry calendars, **he or** she should submit the Request for VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop Form (*See Safe Environment Coordinator Manual*) to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator.
- The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator will contact Facilitators to determine availability for the date and time requested. Upon successfully scheduling a Facilitator, the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator will return the Workshop Confirmation at the bottom of the Request Form to the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator and post the Workshop at VIRTUS Online.
- All workshops will be scheduled and posted three months from the workshop date. Please do not submit requests more than six months in advance. Requests submitted less than one month prior to the workshop date will not be scheduled without special permission from the Safe Environment Coordinator.
- Parish Safe Environment Coordinator should refer to the Workshop Checklist for additional pre-Workshop responsibilities including publicizing the Workshop (*see Parish Safe Environment Coordinator Manual*).

2. Workshop Registration

In order to ensure that there is sufficient space, chairs, materials, refreshments, etc., all Workshop participants **must pre-register** to attend. Please **strongly encourage** all Workshop participants to pre-register online at www.virtus.org or www.archgh.org. This is the most efficient means of accomplishing pre-registration and to ensure that all those mandated by Cardinal DiNardo to attend have done so.

Step by step registration instructions may be downloaded by clicking on the yellow Help link at www.virtus.org. For those Workshop participants who do not have internet access at their homes, the parish is encouraged to publicize a time when participants may register online at the parish offices with the assistance of the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator, a parish staff member or volunteer.

3. Workshop Equipment & Participant Materials

When the parish is hosting a Workshop, the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator must refer again to the Workshop Checklist (*see Parish Safe Environment Coordinator Manual*) for additional responsibilities, including securing the necessary equipment and Workshop materials.

The Parish Safe Environment Coordinator should be prepared to be on site the day of the Workshop and make arrangements for sufficient copies of the participant materials, which consists of the following:

- VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Participant Workbook*
- A General Guide When You Suspect Child Abuse or Neglect (*Texas Attorney General brochure*)
- Archdiocesan Policy for Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor
- Archdiocesan Formation Programs Information
- Evaluation Forms
- Tri-fold Protecting God's Children® Quick Reference Guide

The copies of the above participant materials are available in both English and Spanish.

*The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has been granted a license from VIRTUS® that allows you to photocopy this workbook.

4. Viewing/Printing Workshop Sign-In Sheet(s)

The Parish Safe Environment Coordinator may view and print a list of those individuals who are pre-registered for the upcoming workshop to be hosted at their home location directly from the VIRTUS website as follows:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Enter user i.d. and password
- Go to "Administration" tab top right
- Select "Instructor Led Training" in left margin
- Select session from the drop down box
- Scroll to the bottom and select either "export sign-in" or "create sign-in sheet"

The day of the workshop, the Safe Environment Coordinator should access and print a sign-in sheet containing the list of individuals that have pre-registered to attend the Workshop and format the sign-in sheet to provide ample room for the signature line.(See directions in Coordinator Manual)

IN ORDER FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR ATTENDING THE WORKSHOP, THEY MUST SIGN-IN.

5. Walk-ins

In the event participants arrive to attend the Workshop without pre-registering, a blank Sign-In Sheet should be available for those participants. (This sheet should have the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston on the top) Any walk-ins should only be admitted on a space availability basis. When the walk-in participant signs in, inquire whether or not the person has internet access. If they have internet access, please provide them instructions for registering their attendance online at www.virtus.org and ask them to complete the registration within 3 days. Those without internet access MUST be registered by the Safe Environment Coordinator using the “Registration form for Individuals without Internet Access Only.”

6. Late Entrants

After the first video *A Time to Protect God’s Children* begins, the sign-in sheets must be collected by the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator who will forward them to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT BE ALLOWED TO SIGN-IN AFTER THE FIRST VIDEO HAS STARTED.** It is imperative that every participant arrives before the first video begins to receive the complete message of the program. There may be resistance to this procedure!

7. Community Resource Referral

During the course of the presentation of the Workshop, particularly the first video, there may be participants that find the content of the material extremely difficult to view. Understand that the video may be surfacing memories of the past abuse of the participant or a close family member and the severe pain the experience causes. The participant may wish to leave the Workshop. We ask that the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator please approach them gently and compassionately, attempt to persuade them to wait for the second video which is very empowering and outlines the plan to ensure that no other child will have to suffer the way that they have suffered. We also have prepared a list of community resources to be provided to the individual to seek additional help in dealing with the abuse (*see Parish Safe Environment Program Manual*), which includes the contact information for the Victim's Assistance Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Copies of this resource should be available at the Workshop.

7. Workshop Documentation

After hosting a VIRTUS Workshop, the following documentation should be collected and forwarded to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator for processing immediately:

- Sign-in Sheets (Parish Coordinators should keep a copy for his or her records)
- Background Check Authorizations
- Volunteer Codes of Conduct
- Evaluations

- Parental Consents (if there were any minors in attendance)

Please note that Application for Volunteer Service forms should be retained on file at the volunteer's home location and **should not** be forwarded to the Archdiocese. If any pertinent information is missing from the Criminal Background Check Authorizations or Volunteer Codes of Conduct the form will be returned to the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator.

C. VERIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE AT VIRTUS WORKSHOP – THROUGH PARISH SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATOR

An individual's attendance should be verified through the local Parish Safe Environment Coordinator. All local coordinators with access to the internet are authorized to view and print the list of workshop attendees who have identified themselves as either employees or volunteers of a particular location, including those attending the training outside of their home parish or school.

1. Instructions for Parish Safe Environment Coordinators/Principals to View List of VIRTUS Attendees from their home location:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Enter your user I.D. and password
- Select the "Administration" tab top right
- Under "Reports" - Left Margin
- Select "Training Reports"
- Select Category - "Live training reports"
- Select "Run Report by Users"
- Select "Location" (*your home location should appear in the drop down list*)
- Click on "Include inactive users," if you want a full report
- Click "Continue" (*the next screen will be a list of all individuals identifying themselves as either employee or volunteers of your parish/school*)

2. Instructions for Parish Safe Environment Coordinators/Principals to view a list of Pre-registered Users from their home location (*regardless of what session they are pre-registered to attend*):

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Enter your user I.D. and password
- Select the "Administration" tab top right
- Select "Pre-registered Users" in left margin

3. Procedure for Acceptance of VIRTUS Training Received Outside of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

A new employee or volunteer moving into our Archdiocese may have previously attended the VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop in their former Diocese and is requesting an exemption from the requirement to attend the 3 hour workshop in this Archdiocese. Because the reporting laws regarding child abuse

and neglect vary by jurisdiction, as well as the local Diocesan reporting policy, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston will only accept an individual's VIRTUS training from outside of this Archdiocese if the following requirements are met:

- Attendance at the VIRTUS Training outside of our Archdiocese occurred during the last 12 months;
- Parish Safe Environment Coordinator has obtained written confirmation from previous Diocese of attendance; and
- Parish Safe Environment Coordinator has reviewed the following information with the new employee or volunteer:
 - Archdiocesan reporting policy
 - Texas law regarding mandatory report of child abuse or neglect
 - Archdiocesan Faith Formation Programs Information

Parish Safe Environment Coordinator should submit completed Request for Acceptance of VIRTUS Workshop Training from Prior Diocese form to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator for processing.

D. SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM CONTACTS

1. Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston:

Isabel Guerra, Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator
Post Office Box 907
Houston, Texas 77001-0907
Phone: 713-652-4443,
Facsimile: 713-654-5763
iguerra@archgh.org

Karen Ann Martin, Associate Director of Safe Environment
Phone: 713-652-4401
Post Office Box 907
Houston, Texas 77001-0907
Facsimile: 713-654-5763
kamartin@archgh.org

2. VIRTUS® Organization:

Pat Neal
Director, VIRTUS Programs & Services
321 S. Boston Avenue, Suite 900
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103
Phone: 888-847-8870
Facsimile: 918-582-5261
pneal@virtus.org
helpdesk@virtus.org

SECTION III – CHILDREN/YOUTH PROGRAMS

A. TRAINING FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH TO PROTECT THEMSELVES

1. Training in Public and Private Schools

The U.S. Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People mandates that children and youth and provided with age appropriate training on personal safety, improper touching and relationships, how to deal with uncomfortable situations and how to identify safe adults. This type of training is mandated by the Texas Administrative Code for children enrolled in public schools. The specific curriculum for each grade level is posted on the website of the Texas Education Agency and may be viewed by following these instructions:

*Go to website: www.tea.state.tx
Select the Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS)
Select Chapter 115 Health Education*

In our private schools, the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools confirms on an annual basis with each of our Catholic schools that training comparable to that mandated by the State for public schools is provided to all enrolled students through a survey. Each individual school determines where in the curriculum the training is provided, i.e. health class, religion class, human sexuality class, etc.

2. Supplemental Archdiocesan Training Program

In addition to the training provided in the school environment, the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Committee is currently developing an additional program for implementation across the Archdiocese to ensure that all children and youth have the opportunity to receive this type of training from the Catholic faith perspective, regardless of whether they are students in private or public schools. The program is expected to be introduced in the Spring of 2009.

B. TRAINING FOR MINOR VOLUNTEERS/EMPLOYEES TO PROTECT OTHERS

The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Committee is also developing global standards for minors who are either employed or engaged in volunteer activities with other children, i.e. minimum age requirements for certain ministries/activities, youth code of conduct, etc. In addition, there will be an age appropriate training program for ministries utilizing minor volunteers and/or employees (*i.e. CCE aids, summer/sports camps, scouting, vacation bible school, early childhood centers, parish nurseries, etc.*). This program is expected to be introduced for implementation in the Spring of 2009 as well.

1. Minors Attending VIRTUS Workshop

Minors (ages 15 and under) engaged in volunteer activities with other children and youth should no longer be asked or allowed to attend the VIRTUS training, as the Archdiocese is actively developing standards and age appropriate training to assist minors in their

specific volunteer ministries (i.e. nursery, CCE aide, summer camp, vacation bible school, etc.). Until such time as the training program is complete and being implemented, these minors should be allowed to volunteer with other children and youth, so long as they are being supervised by an adult that has been VIRTUS trained.

Minors (ages 16 and 17) engaged in volunteer activities with other children and youth should be **strongly encouraged** to attend the VIRTUS training either with their parent/guardian present or their written consent. If the parent/guardian does not wish to accompany them to the training and/or refuses to consent, the minor may be allowed to volunteer with other children and youth, so long as they are being supervised by an adult that has been VIRTUS trained.