

Diocese of Columbus Safe Environment Manual

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DECREE

ESTABLISHING POLICIES DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS BY PRIESTS, DEACONS OR OTHER CHURCH PERSONNEL

1. Introduction.

The Diocese of Columbus is committed to the protection and safety of children in the Diocese of Columbus. This commitment follows the fundamental mission of the Church to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to give authentic witness to the moral teaching of the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church, and to uphold the human dignity of every person. The diocese is fully resolved to use every effort to prevent the occurrence of any act of abuse within the jurisdiction of the diocese and to confront any act of abuse immediately and forthrightly so as to maintain the trust and respect of the faithful within the diocese for their clergy and the Church.

This decree is issued in accordance with Canon 31 of the Code of Canon Law and shall be binding upon all applicable persons of the Diocese of Columbus, including its parishes, ministries, apostolates, schools, and other institutions organized and/or affiliated with the Diocese immediately upon its publication. This decree seeks to comply fully with and specify in more detail the steps to be taken in implementing canon law, especially Canons 1717-1719.

The provisions of this decree are adopted to fulfill the commitment of the Diocese of Columbus to the protection and safety of children. In addition to the specific provisions of this decree, the measures regarding the prevention of sexual abuse of minors, as well as the pastoral, administrative and canonical response to incidents of alleged sexual abuse of minors, and the standards of behavior for clergy and others in positions of trust, are subject to other canonical laws, diocesan policies, guidelines and practices, which individually retain the force proper to each. Matters which are fully treated elsewhere or are determined by other canonical or diocesan laws or policies, universal or particular, generally are not repeated in this decree. The Diocese of Columbus acknowledges the binding force of the Essential Norms as particular law for the Church in the United States, and no part of this policy is to be interpreted in a way that conflicts with those Norms or other binding canon or civil laws.

These policies are to comply with the requirements of canon law, and are adopted as part of the disciplinary process of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Definitions.

For the purpose of implementing this decree, the following definitions shall apply:

1. Sexual Abuse shall have the meaning stated in the USCCB document, Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, at Footnote 1 to Article 1. The term shall also apply to any allegation as to a minor who is an abused child as defined in Section 2151.031 of the Ohio Revised Code.
2. A Minor is any person under the age of 18 at the time an act of sexual abuse occurs; a student in a Diocesan school or Diocesan school program, a person under twenty-one years

of age with a developmental disability or physical impairment, or a person who habitually lacks the use of reason.

3. A Priest shall be any priest ordained in the Roman Catholic Church, who has not been laicized or who has not defected from the ministry, and incardinated in the Diocese of Columbus or legitimately assigned in the diocese under the authority of the Bishop of Columbus at the time an act of sexual abuse of a minor occurred.
4. A Deacon shall be any deacon ordained in the Roman Catholic Church, who has not been laicized or who has not defected from the ministry, and incardinated in the Diocese of Columbus or legitimately assigned in the Diocese of Columbus under the authority of the Bishop of Columbus when an act of sexual abuse of a minor occurred.
5. Church Personnel subject to this decree shall be any employee, agent or volunteer authorized by the appropriate Church authority to have care, control or custody of a minor, and having responsibility for the care, control or custody of a minor when an act of sexual abuse of that minor occurred. Examples of Church Personnel include: Clergy, brothers, seminarians, religious, certified pastoral ministers, parish life coordinators, members of a pastoral team, principals, teachers, diocesan or parish employees, employees of a corporation within the juridic person of the diocese, or any persons appointed by the Bishop.
6. A Volunteer is a person who gives his/her services to the Diocese, a parish or other entity affiliated with the Diocese without any express or implied promise of remuneration. A Volunteer includes, but is not limited to, a catechist, coach, choir director, altar server coordinator, youth leader, interns, student teacher and others in similar capacities, chaperones, and other occasional volunteers.
7. Ordinary shall mean the Diocesan Bishop or the Vicar General.

3. Organizational Policies.

The following action shall be taken under the authority and direction of the Bishop of Columbus:

1. The decree which establishes the standards of conduct for Church Personnel, including as stated in Appendix I is incorporated as part of these policies. These standards shall be provided to each Priest, Deacon or other appropriate Church Personnel in the Diocese of Columbus, and shall be published in the diocesan newspaper. These standards of conduct for clergy, teachers, and others in positions of trust may be reviewed and revised periodically at the direction of the Ordinary.
2. A competent person designated by the Bishop will coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by a Priest, Deacon or Other Personnel. It will be the responsibility of this person, known as the Diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, to assist with the provision of counseling, spiritual/pastoral assistance and other social services to abused persons who seek such service. The position of the Victims Assistance Coordinator within the Diocese of Columbus

is, and on a going forward basis will be, filled by a qualified lay person.

3. The Diocese will have separate individuals handle the roles of Promoter of Justice, Victims' Assistance Coordinator, and Vicar General to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts of interest.
4. The form for commencement of a complaint set forth in Appendix II is adopted. Copies of the form shall be available at each parish office and school in the diocese, and at the Diocesan Chancery, 198 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215. These forms may also be found on the Diocesan website—www.columbuscatholic.org.
5. A Review Board has been established to function as a confidential consultative body to assist the Bishop in discharging his responsibilities, particularly in respect to the fulfillment of Canons 1717-1719. The functions of the Review Board shall be:
 - a. Advising the Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors involving Priests and Deacons and in his determination of suitability for ministry;
 - b. Reviewing diocesan policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors; and,
 - c. Offering advice on all aspects of cases involving sexual abuse of minors, whether retrospectively or prospectively.
5. The Review Board shall operate under the Diocese of Columbus Review Board Policies and Procedures attached hereto as Appendix III.
6. The communications policy for the Diocese of Columbus with regard to matters treated in this decree shall be as follows: Within the confines of respect for the civil and canonical rights to privacy and the reputation of all individuals involved, the Diocese of Columbus will communicate allegations where there is sufficient information to proceed. While canon law requires that the acts of an investigation regarding a priest or deacon must be kept confidential and the Norms further require that the deliberations of the Review Board be confidential, nevertheless, the diocese will strive to communicate the major decisions which have been made in individual cases, the status of persons, and the progress of investigations and procedures insofar as is possible without divulging such confidential information. The Diocesan Director of Communications may be consulted to assist with appropriate responses to the media or to the public. If diocesan schools or religious education programs are involved, the Superintendent of Catholic Schools and/or Director of Evangelization may be requested to provide assistance in communications.
7. A "Safe Environment" program shall be provided for the Diocese, and a Coordinator to oversee this program will be appointed and will be available to assist with implementation and administration of the program, and to respond to concerns, questions, and requests for information. The program shall provide education and training to all Church personnel to maintain a safe environment for children. The Diocese will cooperate with parents,

community leaders and other interested parties to establish and provide a safe environment for children.

8. All school staff and volunteers who have care, custody and control of students must have on file a current Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation criminal background check pursuant to Policy 4110.0 of the Policies and Regulations of the Office of Catholic Schools, Diocese of Columbus. All Priests, Deacons, Church Personnel, other than school personnel, and Church volunteers who have unsupervised access to children must be informed that they may be subject to fingerprinting and criminal background checks at any time as required by Section 109.575 of the Ohio Revised Code. Actual background checks of Priests, Deacons, Other Church Personnel or volunteers with unsupervised access to children may be requested by Church officials in cases determined to be appropriate or necessary. The document entitled “Best Practices for Screening Volunteers who Work with Children and Youth in the Parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus” attached as Appendix IV is recommended for reference in regard to screening volunteers.
9. These policies will be provided to each Priest and Deacon, and to all other Church Personnel to whom it applies, in the diocese. The policies shall be published in the diocesan newspaper periodically. The policies shall be available for distribution or inspection by any Other Church Personnel with care, control or custody of minors and will be provided upon request made by any person at any parish office or at the Chancery Office, 198 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

4. Procedural Policies Upon Receiving An Allegation of Abuse of a Minor.

An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a Priest, Deacon or Other Church Personnel may be initiated in various ways, including the filing of a complaint form, direct contact with the Ordinary, a pastor, or school or Church personnel by the party alleging abuse or a family member thereof, or by a claim presented in a civil law proceeding. The allegations may be by or for a specifically identified claimant. Allegations cannot be received under condition of anonymity except for the most serious reasons.

The following actions shall be taken immediately upon receipt of any allegation, regardless of who presents the allegation or how the allegation is received:

1. The allegation shall immediately be referred to the Ordinary. Any subordinate person in the Church who receives such an allegation in whatever manner shall forward it to the Ordinary without delay. If the allegation is received in the form of a civil action, the Diocesan Attorney shall immediately be notified and shall take appropriate action to respond to the civil claim.
2. Upon receiving an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a Priest, Deacon or Other Church Personnel, the matter shall immediately be reported to the civil authorities regardless of how old the allegation is, or whether the accused is living or deceased. The Diocesan Attorney shall be consulted as to the procedures for reporting. The claimant shall be advised of the claimant’s right to report the allegations to the civil authorities as

well, if the claimant has not previously reported. The Diocese will cooperate with any civil investigation as required by law.

3. A preliminary evaluation of the allegation will be initiated by the Ordinary and conducted promptly and objectively to determine if the allegation has any semblance of truth. If the Ordinary determines that the allegation does not have a semblance of truth (for example, if it lacks all specificity, is irreconcilable with known facts, or cannot be deciphered), except as stated in Paragraph 2 above, nothing further will be done, unless the accused is a living clergy member. In such a case, even though the Ordinary has determined that the allegation has no semblance of truth, he shall still report the allegation to the Diocesan Review Board along with his determination that the allegation had no semblance of truth.
4. If the Ordinary determines that the allegation has any semblance of truth, the following actions will be taken:
 - a. If the accused is not a Priest or a Deacon, the Church administrator with authority over the person accused, will be advised and the Church administrator, after consultation with the Ordinary, will determine appropriate action, such as suspension or termination of employment.
 - b. If the allegation involves a Priest or a Deacon, the investigation mentioned in Canon 1717 (the “prior investigation”) will be initiated by decree of the Ordinary, unless it appears the investigation is entirely superfluous. The Ordinary will generally designate or appoint an independent private investigator to conduct an investigation, which will typically include interviews of those individuals with relevant information concerning the allegation. The accused cleric shall obtain civil and canonical counsel prior to any discussions with diocesan authorities regarding the allegation. (In cases where a cleric of another jurisdiction is the accused, the matter will be referred to the cleric’s proper Ordinary for conduct of the investigation.) If circumstances indicate, the cleric may be placed on administrative leave immediately pending the investigation. Such circumstances may include immediate concern for the safety of children or publicity and notoriety of the allegation. For cases involving Priests or Deacons, a Review Board has been established according to the requirements of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Essential Norms. The Ordinary will seek the advice of the Review Board in its capacity as a confidential consultative board in conducting the prior investigation as foreseen in Canon 1717.1 and 1718.3. The allegation will be referred promptly to the Secretary of the Review Board, who shall then proceed according to the established procedures of the Review Board (see Appendix III). The Promoter of Justice shall participate in all meetings of the Review Board in which an allegation of abuse is being discussed by the Review Board.
 - c. At any time following the preliminary evaluation, the Victim’s Assistance Coordinator will determine the appropriate actions for healing and reconciliation

with the accuser and the accuser's family. The actions may include provision of counseling, spiritual and/or pastoral assistance and other social services available and agreed to by the accuser and the diocese. The Bishop or his representative will offer to meet with the accuser and the accuser's family in recognition of a sincere commitment to the spiritual and emotional well-being of the accuser and the accuser's family.

- d. Care must be taken lest anyone's good name be endangered by this investigation (Canon 1717.2). Appropriate information as to the facts involved in the allegations as determined by the Ordinary in consultation with the Director of Communications shall be communicated to the public pursuant to the communications policy found in Section III, No. 6 above.
5. When the Ordinary determines that sufficient information has been obtained, the Review Board shall consider the case and offer recommendations to the Ordinary in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and of suitability for ministry as set forth in Section IV of the Diocesan Review Board Policies and Procedures. Having heard the Review Board's recommendations, therefore, the Ordinary shall proceed as follows:
- a. If the allegation is determined by the Ordinary not to be credible, the matter shall be closed. The accused and the accuser shall be advised as to the results of the investigation and the closing of the case. All appropriate actions to clear the name of the accused shall be followed.
 - b. If an allegation involving a Priest or a Deacon is admitted or is determined by the Ordinary to be probable, and if accordingly, he determines that the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state is to be sought, the Ordinary, in accordance with Canon 1718.4, shall inform the accused of the results of the investigation and inquire whether he may wish to pursue voluntary laicization in order to avoid the necessity of a penal judicial trial. The Ordinary will inform the accused of this by means of a decree in which the Ordinary gives the accused a suitable period of time to consider his options. In the same decree, the Ordinary may close the prior investigation and invoke the application of the precautionary measures mentioned in Canon 1722 in accordance with Paragraph 6 of the Norms.
 - c. When the accused has responded to the decree mentioned in the previous paragraph, if the accused wishes to petition for laicization voluntarily, a decree of suspension will be issued and the process for voluntary laicization will be undertaken in the normal manner. If the accused does not wish to proceed voluntarily, then the Ordinary will issue the decree mentioned in Canon 1718.1. Since sexual abuse, as defined in the Charter and Norms and as referred to in Canon 1395.2 is a grave delict reserved to the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, this matter shall be referred to said Congregation, which may either call the case to itself or advise the Ordinary how to proceed. The remainder of the Penal Process is governed by the applicable universal and particular canon laws.

6. At all times, the Bishop has the executive power of governance as stated in Paragraph 9 of the Norms.

5. Other Policies

1. Paragraph 12 of the Norms shall be followed in regard to the transfer from ministerial assignment from the Diocese of Columbus to another diocese or religious province. If a Priest or a Deacon is to be received into the Diocese of Columbus, before receiving the Priest or Deacon, the Bishop will obtain the necessary information regarding any past act of sexual abuse of a minor by a Priest or a Deacon in question and will determine if the transfer will be accepted. Any past history of sexual abuse would disqualify a Priest or Deacon from another jurisdiction for service in the Diocese of Columbus.
2. These policies shall be reviewed at least once in each five-year period. The Review Board shall commence the process of review and shall assist the Bishop by presenting a report to him as to each review, including recommendations for amendments, or stating that the policies have been reviewed and no amendments are recommended by the Review Board. The Bishop shall advise the Review Board as to action taken by him in response to the report.
3. If allegations are resolved by agreement between parties, the terms of the agreement shall not include provisions as to confidentiality unless grave and substantial reasons for confidentiality are presented by the accuser with a request for confidentiality, and the reasons are stated in the agreement.
4. The Bishop or his representative shall maintain regular contact with Priests and Deacons who have been accused. The Bishop or his representative may provide assistance, advice and support to the accused, and may provide and facilitate referrals to counselors and other professionals who can provide psychological, emotional and spiritual assistance to the accused. The Bishop or his delegate shall monitor Priests and Deacons who are on leaves of absence, or removed from the ministry but not laicized, to provide assistance and to determine that any conditions or obligations of the accused are being followed.
5. These policies are to be administered to be uniform with the *Charter* and the *Norms*, and any inconsistencies shall be resolved by conforming these policies to the *Charter* and the *Norms*.

Given at the Chancery Office this 15th day of May 2003.

The Most Rev. James A. Griffin
Bishop of Columbus

Amended this 30th day of August, 2016.

The Most Rev. Frederick F. Campbell
Bishop of Columbus

Amended this 24th day of January, 2024.

The Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

+ Earl K. Fernandes

Amended this 12th day of August, 2025.

The Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

*Michael R. Hodge VC
Ecclesiastical Notary*

DECREE
**STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL, INCLUDING CLERGY,
TEACHERS, EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS
AND OTHER PERSONS IN POSITIONS OF TRUST**

Preamble

This decree establishes standards of clergy conduct, in accordance with Article 6 and Article 12 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People approved in November 2002 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. These standards of conduct are also applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to other Church Personnel and Volunteers (hereinafter referred to collectively as, “Applicable Persons”).

The purpose of these standards is to make clear to clergy and others in positions of trust the need to exercise prudence, avoid any semblance of impropriety, protect their own ministry and reputation, and, most importantly, to safeguard children, young people and other vulnerable persons from harm. At the same time, these standards of conduct are not intended to stifle the ability of priests, deacons and others who exercise some ecclesiastical office or ministry to carry out their ministry or to be available and accessible to their people, nor are they intended to create an atmosphere of suspicion. Furthermore, these standards are general and are to be interpreted broadly rather than minutely structured in every detail. It is understood that the standards require adaptation to the various circumstances of time and place or in case of emergency.

This decree is not an exhaustive policy but presupposes and further specifies other laws, policies and procedures already in existence; in particular, in accord with Canon 285, it seeks to further specify appropriate clerical conduct and, in accord with Canon 277, to provide more specific norms to the clergy for conducting themselves with due prudence. It is understood that acts already condemned by the law of the Church or by the moral teaching of the Church are always and everywhere forbidden and it is not necessary to reiterate them in this document. Given the tense and suspicious atmosphere which prevails today, even perfectly innocent activities may now be viewed as compromising, ambiguous or imprudent. It is this reality which these standards seek to address.

Standards

These standards apply to the incardinated clergy of the Diocese of Columbus at all times and in every place, both within and outside of the Diocese of Columbus. They apply to all religious and extern priests and deacons who exercise any ministry under the authority or oversight of the Bishop of Columbus. They apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to lay persons in positions of trust, teachers within Diocesan and Parochial schools, and all persons exercising an authorized ministry as an employee or volunteer for the Diocese of Columbus, its offices, agencies, parishes, institutions and organizations.

1. Applicable Persons shall ensure that their activities and interactions with youth shall be as

open as the situation allows, and shall avoid any interaction that has even the appearance of being secret or clandestine. Applicable Persons shall be aware of others' vulnerability when working alone with youth, and always use a team approach where possible, to managing youth activities.

2. Applicable Persons shall never meet alone with a minor in an isolated room (except in the case of sacramental confession) unless there is a window on the door, or the door is open and accessible to others. Additionally, Applicable Persons shall never meet alone with a minor in location away from a parish, school agency, institution, or other Diocese Organization, and never meet alone in remote locations on the property of a parish, school, agency, or other Diocese Organization. These restrictions apply to after school tutoring of any sort whether or not the tutor is hired by the minor's parents.
3. Two-Deep Requirement - Applicable Persons shall never participate in Diocesan sponsored group activities for minors that do not have at least two supervising adults present, both of whom have successfully completed a training program approved by the Diocese and have approved background reports ("compliant"). *Exceptions for this Policy are allowed only for sacramental confession, and for classroom instruction provided by a properly trained teacher within a classroom setting.*
4. As part of the Diocesan Two-Deep Requirement, Applicable Persons shall not give rides in motor vehicles to minors unless another compliant adult is present and the permission of the minor's parent or legal guardian is granted. Likewise, for all field trips, there should be a minimum of two compliant adults in each vehicle that is transporting minors. See *Section 200.30*.
5. Applicable Persons shall have a sufficient number of adult chaperones over the age of 21 for all youth trips, especially overnight ones. A member of the Clergy, a Volunteer, or any Church Personnel should never be sole chaperone for any trip or activity. When staying overnight with minors, no Church Personnel or Volunteer should sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag, small tent, or bedroom with minors.
6. As part of the Diocesan Two-Deep Requirement, Applicable Persons shall never be present in locker rooms or other dressing rooms used by minors without another adult over the age of 21 being present and shall have a reasonable and justifiable purpose for doing so. Never linger or hang around or spend long periods in locker rooms or other dressing rooms.
7. Applicable Persons should avoid physical contact with a minor. Physical contact shall occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and should never occur in private. Examples of inappropriate expressions of physical affection with a minor, include but are not limited to: Close or lengthy embraces; kisses; holding minors over two years of age on the lap; touching bottoms, chests or genital areas; wrestling with minors; tickling; piggyback rides; any type of massage given to or received from a minor; and any form of unwanted affection; or compliments that relate to physique or body development.

8. Applicable Persons shall never engage in physical discipline for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. In addition, never use any discipline that frightens or humiliates.
9. Applicable Persons, when working with minors, shall refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, vaping and other materials or substances which minors cannot legally purchase. Additionally, Applicable Persons shall never share such substances and materials with minors, or allow minors to use materials or substances which minors cannot legally purchase.
10. Applicable Persons shall never acquire, possess, or distribute pornographic images of minors, nor introduce sexually explicit or pornographic topics, vocabulary, music, recording, films, games, websites, computer software, or entertainment when communicating with minors.
11. Applicable Persons may not initiate one-to-one private electronic communication with a minor. All interaction and communication must be open, public, transparent, and appropriate. See *Sections 400.00–400.13* for more instruction.
12. Applicable Persons shall avoid displaying and/or taking photographs of an unrelated minor (unless explicit permission of their parents or guardian and the relevant supervisor).
13. Clergy shall make a clear distinction between the public and private areas in the rectory, and make the private areas generally inaccessible to visitors. Clergy shall limit access to the priest's private quarters to the priest, rectory staff, other clergy and the priest's relatives.
14. Clergy shall meet with individuals only in the office of the church or public areas of the rectory, church, or school, and, insofar as possible, never be alone with a minor, especially in circumstances which are concealed from public view (e.g., behind closed doors or in an automobile). The confessional or other location in which the Sacrament of Reconciliation is being properly celebrated according to the approved rite is exempt from this provision. Care must also be exercised whenever a minor requests a private, confidential conference.
15. Clergy shall avoid spending excessive amounts of time with the same parishioners or families, or in the homes of the same families or persons. (While social interaction with laypersons is desirable, exceeding prudent boundaries can be misconstrued.)
16. Clergy may show broad interest in the children and youth of the parish or assignment but should avoid showing preference or giving privileges to specific individuals, such as giving them money or gifts, asking them to accompany oneself on errands, asking them to perform services or help with jobs or tasks, outside of regular employment, excusing them from school or giving them access to the rectory.
17. Clergy shall follow all diocesan regulations regarding youth activities and ensure that another compliant adult is present whenever supervising or chaperoning a minor or a group of

minors, which may only occur in the context of events sponsored by the parish, school or diocese.

18. Clergy should remember you are role models who must always reflect the values of the Catholic Church in word and action in all circumstances, public and private, whether on or off duty. In particular, speak and act gently and respectfully and with discretion in any mode of communication, and avoid all coarse, demeaning or suggestive language, conversations or discussions.
19. Clergy shall never request or permit young persons to accompany them on vacation trips or overnight or day trips.
20. Clergy shall never invite young persons to a private residence or other private dwelling, be it a family home, vacation cottage, rental, condominium or any other place which is not then and there being used as a venue for a church-sponsored gathering.
21. Applicable Persons shall avoid forming purely personal relationships with minors. Young persons should not be the focus of an adult's social life, nor should adults share inappropriate personal information with youth or pursue purely social, recreational or interpersonal activities alone with them. They should not visit youth in their homes when parents or other responsible adults are not present.
22. All Applicable Persons should always strive to act with utmost professionalism, to develop a keen sense of propriety and the ability to sense and avoid potentially problematic situations.
23. All Applicable Persons should behave in such a forthright and open way as if every action were being observed by an unseen third party.
24. All Applicable Persons shall report any known or suspected violations of the Standards of Conduct to the appropriate Diocesan authority. With respect to known or suspected violations of the Standards of Conduct by a priest or deacon, the report should be made to the Ordinary. With respect to violations of the Standards of Conduct by teachers or other Church Personnel, the report should be made to the Diocesan Director of the Safe Environment Office.

Given at the Chancery Office this 28th day of January, 2003.

The Most Rev. James A. Griffin
Bishop of Columbus

Amended this 30th day of August, 2016.

The Most Rev. Frederick F. Campbell
Bishop of Columbus

Amended this 24th day of January, 2024.
The Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

+ *Earl K. Fernandes*

Amended this 12th day of August, 2025.
The Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

Michael R. Hodge v6
Ecclesiastical Notary

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
COMPLAINT FORM FOR ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR

This form may be used to present allegations that a Priest, Deacon or Church employee, agent or volunteer has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor. The completed Form is CONFIDENTIAL and is to be submitted to: Victims Assistance Coordinator, Diocese of Columbus, 198 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, in a sealed envelope clearly marked CONFIDENTIAL. This form may also be sent to the secure inbox of the Victims Assistance Coordinator at: helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org.

I. INFORMATION AS TO MINOR

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name and Address of Parent(s) or Guardian: _____

Telephone No: _____

Parish: _____

Name of school attending: _____

II. INFORMATION AS TO THE ACCUSED

Name: _____

Position: _____Clergy _____Deacon _____Employee _____Volunteer

Name and Address of place of employment: _____

Has accused been confronted or informed of allegation? _____Yes _____No

If yes, when and by whom: _____

III. INFORMATION AS TO ALLEGATIONS

Brief description of alleged abuse (time, place and acts): _____

Have the allegations been reported to any civil authorities or Church personnel? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, when, how and to whom: _____

Date of Report

Signature of Person Reporting

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

**DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
REVIEW BOARD
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

I. Purpose of Review Board

The Review Board of the Diocese of Columbus is established under the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, and the Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons, or Other Church Personnel, as published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Charter and Essential Norms are attached hereto as Appendix A and Appendix B, and are incorporated into these Policies and Procedures. The actions of the Board of Review are to protect the children in the Diocese of Columbus, and are taken as part of the internal administration of the disciplinary process of the Roman Catholic Church. The Board of Review will assist the Bishop by:

- A. The assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons and other church personnel in order to advise the Bishop as to whether the allegations appear to be credible;
- B. Making recommendations concerning fitness for ministry in particular cases; and
- C. Reviewing the policy and procedures of the Diocese for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors at least every two years to recommend to the Bishop any appropriate modifications.

II. Formation of the Board of Review

The Board of Review shall consist of at least five members in full communion with the Catholic Church, the majority of which will be lay persons not in the employ of the Diocese. At least one member of the Board of Review shall be a priest, and at least one member shall have expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors. Additionally, at least one member of the Review Board should be an attorney licensed to practice law in Ohio and who has a background relating to criminal, workplace, and/or other substantial investigations.

The initial members of the Board of Review shall be appointed by the Bishop. Two of the initial members as selected by the members shall have initial terms of two years each. The other three members will have an initial term of three years. Terms after the initial terms shall be for three years. Any member of the Board of Review can serve a maximum of two terms.

In the event of termination of membership for any reason, including expiration of a term, the remaining members of the Board shall nominate a replacement member. The nomination shall be presented to the Bishop, and upon approval by the Bishop, the nominee shall become a member of the Board of Review.

III. Operating Procedures

The Board of Review shall have the following operating procedures:

- A. The members of the Board shall annually elect a member to be Chairperson, and a member to be Secretary. The Chairperson shall act as spokesperson for the Board of Review, and the Secretary shall maintain the records of the Board of Review. Members are eligible for reelection without limitation. The Chairperson shall preside over the meetings of the Board of Review, and if the Chairperson is not present, the Secretary shall preside over the meeting. If neither officer is present, the members present shall elect a member to preside over the meeting, and a member to maintain the records of the meeting.
- B. The fiscal year of the Board of Review shall be from July 1 through June 30.
- C. The Board of Review may adopt any operating rules which the members determine appropriate for the conduct of business. It is anticipated that the deliberation of matters before the Board will be primarily and preferentially by discussion, and that actions of the Board will be taken by consensus of the members. If consensus is not reached, a matter presented to the Board may be decided by vote, with each member having one vote, and a majority of the votes of the members present shall control. The actions taken by the Board shall be formalized in minutes which shall be prepared under authority of the Secretary, and signed by the Secretary.
- D. All deliberations and actions taken by the Board of Review shall be confidential. A disclosure of any information shall be made solely to the Bishop or the Bishop's representative. If the Board of Review desires or recommends further disclosure of any matters, the Board shall advise the Bishop as to the matter to be disclosed and the method of disclosure. If the Bishop requests, the Bishop and the Review Board would review and discuss information prior to disclosure. Within the confines of law and the Norms, and of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved, the Board will deal as openly as possible with members of the community.

IV. Procedures for Assistance in Assessing Allegations

After the Ordinary has commissioned an investigation and referred the allegation to the Board, the following procedures will be observed:

- a. The Secretary of the Board of Review will be requested by the Diocesan Promoter of Justice to call a meeting of the Board of Review. The Secretary will call a meeting within 14 days. The Ordinary or his representative shall present to the Board of Review the allegations, and all the materials received and considered by the Ordinary related to the allegation, including but not limited to, all evidence surrounding the matter under investigation, including other parts of the cleric's file that might bear on the relevance of the allegation. The Ordinary, the Ordinary's representative, or the Diocesan Promoter of Justice shall personally attend the meeting of the Board of Review to discuss the allegations.

- b. The information presented to the Board of Review may include any written statements presented by the alleged victim, and any statements by the accused clergy or church personnel involved.
- c. The Diocesan representative presenting the allegation to the Review Board should take utmost care to ensure no conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest is present in the subject of the review.
- d. The Diocesan representative should avoid commentary on the credibility of the priest under review or the credibility of any of the witnesses. The credibility of the accused, the victim, and any witnesses, is solely up to the Board to determine.
- e. The Diocesan representative should be prudent in responding to questions raised by the Review Board as to the ability to successfully pursue any penal process. Absent questions raised by the Review Board, the Diocesan representative should refrain from commenting upon the same in a way that could unduly influence the Board.
- f. The Diocesan Promoter of Justice should have no role in the civil resolution of any allegation presented to the Review Board.
- g. The Board of Review may request information in addition to the information presented by the Bishop or the Bishop's representative. The additional information may consist of written materials or statements, and may include a personal appearance by the alleged victim or the clergy or church personnel involved, if the Board of Review determines such a personal appearance would be appropriate.
- h. After receipt of all information determined necessary by the Board of Review, the Board of Review will prepare a written recommendation to the Bishop stating the determination of the Board of Review as to the allegations presented. The Board of Review shall set as its goal to present its recommendation to the Bishop within ten working days after receipt of all information.
- i. Upon receipt of the recommendation, the Bishop may accept or reject the recommendation of the Board of Review. The assessment of the allegations by the Board of Review, and the determination by the Bishop, shall be communicated to the alleged victim and to the clergy or church personnel involved immediately upon completion of the determination by the Bishop. The information provided to the alleged victim and the clergy or church personnel involved as to the determination will include information as to referral of the case to the Provincial Appellate Review Board established under the Essential Norms, Paragraph 6.

V. Assistance in Assessing Fitness for Ministry

In the event sexual abuse by a priest or a deacon is admitted, or is established, the Bishop shall follow Canon Law and the Charter, Article 5, as to determining the status of the priest or deacon in ministry. Prior to making his determination under Canon Law, the Bishop shall request the

Board of Review to assist the Bishop in assessing the fitness for ministry of the priest or deacon involved. The Bishop may also seek assistance from the Board of Review in determining the fitness for service in the Church as to an accused who is not a priest or deacon.

If the Bishop requests assistance in assessing fitness for ministry, the Bishop shall present to the Board of Review the information available to the Bishop as to the acts involved, and any personal information, such as age, present status of ministry (such as active or retired), and any pertinent health or infirmity information. Upon receipt of the information, the Board of Review shall recommend to the Bishop whether the provisions of the Charter, Article 5, should be applied, or whether some other action as to the ministry of the clergy or church personnel involved should be applied.

VI. Review of Policies and Procedures

The Charter, Article 2, provides that a printed form will be available for use in presenting an allegation to the Diocese. The Board of Review shall review the complaint form, and the complaint form shall be adopted for use in the Diocese upon approval by the Board of Review.

The complaint form shall be a part of periodic public announcements, so that the public will be aware of the procedure to make allegations of abuse of minors to the Diocese. The Board of Review will review and approve the form of public announcements, and the method of making the announcements, at least annually.

The Essential Norms, Paragraph 2, require the Diocese to have a written policy on the sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons, or other church personnel. This policy must be adopted within three months after the effective date of the Norms. The Board of Review shall be presented with the form of written policy to be adopted by the Diocese, and the Board of Review may request the Bishop to provide additional information or background to clarify or explain the policies as proposed. The Board of Review shall review the proposed policies and procedures, and shall provide written comments to the Bishop as to the proposed policies and procedures.

The abuse policies and procedures of the Diocese shall be subject to review and modification by the Bishop, if appropriate or necessary. Any proposed amendments shall be presented to the Board of Review for consideration prior to adoption by the Bishop, and the Board of Review shall provide the Bishop with any comments as to the proposed amendments.

The Board of Review shall make a full review of the current policies and procedures of the Diocese at least once in each two-year calendar period. The Board of Review shall recommend to the Bishop any modifications which the Board of Review determines to be appropriate to ensure that the policies and procedures are in full compliance with the Charter and the Essential Norms, and provide for the protection of minors within the spirit and the letter of the Charter and the Essential Norms. The Board of Review shall present to the Bishop any recommendations for changes in the policies and procedures.

VII. Providing Additional Advice or Responses

In addition to those actions described above, the Board of Review may provide any other advice to the Bishop as to sexual abuse of minor cases as requested by the Bishop, or as determined to be appropriate by the Board of Review. This advice or response may be applied retrospectively or prospectively. This advice or response may include, but is not limited to, review and recommendation as to the Outreach program referred to in the Charter, Article 1, consideration of any request for confidentiality of settlement agreements as referred to in the Charter, Article 3, the Communications policy referred to in the Charter, Article 7, and review of the Safe Environmental programs to be adopted under the Charter, Article 12. The Board of Review may also offer assistance in the cooperation with other churches and ecclesial communities, religious bodies, institutions of learning and other interested organizations in conducting research in the area of sexual abuse of minors, as referred to in the Charter, Article 16.

VIII. Relationship of These Regulations to the Canon Law of the Church

In the event that any of the above contained norms or norms referenced above are in conflict with the canon law of the Church currently in force, the provisions of canon law will prevail.

As revised 11/20/02

Am. PROT. NO. 02/16

January 30, 2018

REFERENCE & BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY

A vital aspect of providing outstanding ministry and service within the Diocese of Columbus is assuring the proper and effective handling of job references and background checks. Unfortunately, there have been times when a potential employee, current employee, or former employee is discovered to have problematic behaviors and, at times, to have engaged in harmful or criminal activity. Understanding this, the Diocese seeks to deal effectively with this reality and prevent problems through a policy and practice for reference and background checking that emphasizes a collaborative and coordinated approach among parish, school, agency, and Diocesan staff. We want to employ the best and most qualified people into our churches, schools, and offices. This new policy helps assure these goals. This policy applies to all parishes, parochial schools, Diocesan offices, and Diocesan high schools. While it does not formally extend to separately incorporated agencies under the authority of the Bishop that are not part of the regular Diocesan employment system, those entities are strongly encouraged to adopt these same practices as a matter of best practice and commitment to safe, high-quality ministry.

This policy covers the following areas:

- The creation of a centralized tracking of information for reference check purposes and staff from around the Diocese working together to make this an effective tool.
- The existing centralized database of background checks administered by the Diocese.
- Reference checks for potential new hires within the Diocese.
- Criminal background checks for new hires at all locations.
- Handling reference check and other information requests for current or former employees within the Diocese.
- Criminal background checks and arrests of current or former employees.
- Criminal records analysis.

There are numerous benefits in this new policy. First, it enables all of us to take a cohesive approach to these matters that emphasizes all personnel in the Diocese partnering in the effort to assure safe and healthy work environments throughout the Diocese. This also helps assure that the best and most qualified candidates work within the Diocese. We will be better able to identify problematic persons and situations prior to offering employment. Finally, this policy assures compliance with current civil law regarding the maintenance of criminal background check information as well as compliance with current EEOC regulations regarding assessment of employees who have criminal convictions.

Authorized Personnel

1. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources, regarding employment matters for diocesan offices and Diocesan level agencies, oversight and maintenance of the Diocesan Human Resources system and all programs used for this purpose, and consultation for all locations utilizing the Diocesan HR system.
2. Pastors at parishes and those properly delegated with hiring authority by the pastor, e.g. business managers and parochial school principals.
3. Directors of Diocesan offices.
4. Principals of Diocesan high schools.

5. Safe Environment Office regarding matters related to criminal background checks and the Diocesan criminal background check database.

Procedures

1. Centralized tracking of reference check completion:

- a. All offers of employment are to be made contingent upon completion of a satisfactory background and reference check. All of the necessary notices and consents, including those required under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, must be completed by the prospective employee and the hiring authority.
- b. When a new employee accepts an offer of employment within the Diocese, the hiring authority at the location where the person will work will have the new hire information required by the Human Resource (HR) system entered into the system in accordance with already established practice.
- c. One of the fields to be completed during new hire data entry is a mandatory check box for whether or not reference checks were done prior to hiring the person. The hiring authority will complete this field by clicking “yes” or “no.”
- d. Once the data is entered, it is submitted for approval by the hiring authority and moved to a holding place in the HR computer system.
- e. From the holding place, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources will review the information submitted, including checking whether or not reference checks were completed.
- f. If the data submitted verifies that reference checks were completed, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources will grant approval and forward the entered data to the Diocesan Insurance office for secondary approval and entry into active status within the system.
- g. If the data submitted indicates that reference checks were not completed, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources will contact the hiring authority and review the importance of doing reference checks.
- h. If the hiring authority decides to go ahead and request reference check information, he or she will complete this according to #5 below and upon completion will resubmit the employee information to the HR system.
- i. If the hiring authority still declines to do reference checks, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources will note this in his or her records and grant approval for the employee’s information to proceed to the Diocesan Insurance Office for final approval and entry into active status.
- j. All entries placed in the HR computer system will be stored there permanently.

2. Centralized tracking of *Protecting God’s Children* training

- a. In accordance with Chancery Protocol 03-25, all employees within the Diocese of Columbus, including those with no contact with minors, are required to complete *Protecting God’s Children*[™] (PGC) safe environment training.
All employees, clergy, religious, and volunteers must be fully compliant with Safe Environment requirements (includes PGC training and a background check) prior to the start of any service or ministry. All necessary background checks, training, and documentation must be completed and verified before any individual may engage in ministry or service in

any capacity. Parishes, schools, and diocesan offices are responsible for ensuring that full compliance is met and documented prior to assigning any duties. In extenuating circumstances ONLY, a grace period for completion of *Protecting God's Children*™ training may be requested through the Diocesan Safe Environment Office.

- b. When new hire information is entered by the hiring authority, there will be a mandatory check box verifying whether or not the PGC training has been completed.
- c. If the Diocesan Director of Human Resources notes that PGC training was not completed prior to hire, he or she shall email a reminder to the hiring authority of the
- d. deadline for completing the training. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources shall, with that email, c.c. the notice to the Safe Environment Director so that he or she can assure that the training is completed by the new hire by the deadline.

3. Maintenance of a centralized database of criminal background checks:

- a. All criminal background check information must, under state and federal law, be sent directly to the Diocese's central database, administered by the Safe Environment Director, for entry into the central database.
- b. Under civil law, both federal and state, only the central database of criminal background checks maintained by the Safe Environment Director can serve as the official source of any information regarding criminal background checks, and Diocesan offices, agencies, and schools as well as parishes and parochial schools must not receive this information from other entities' background check databases. In these circumstances, a new criminal background check will need to be completed.
- c. These background checks are being done by third-party providers (typically Ohio BCI and FBI) and not internally by our own personnel. Therefore, the requirements of applicable law, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act, must be observed.
- d. Information in the Diocesan background check database can and will be shared with Diocesan entities (parishes and parochial schools; Diocesan offices and agencies; and Diocesan high schools) and their hiring authorities.

4. Reference checks for a potential new hire at a Diocesan Office:

- a. The prospective employee must furnish names of references regarding his or her qualifications and suitability for the job for which he or she has applied.
- b. References may include current and past supervisors, pastors, co-workers, and individuals who can attest to the candidate's work ethics, character, skills, experiences, responsibilities, and so forth.
- c. These references are to be submitted directly to the Diocesan Director of Human Resources when the hiring is being done by a Diocesan office.
- d. At least one of the submitted references must be from a current or past employer. The candidate will be asked to sign a release for prior employers to answer questions from the Diocese. A candidate refusing this will not be offered employment.
- e. Where possible, inquiries made of prior employers will be directed to administrative level personnel rather than coworkers only.
- f. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources may make additional inquiries about the job candidate beyond the names provided by the prospective employee. When possible, this should include interviews with direct supervisors at prior jobs to determine the candidate's eligibility for rehire.

- g. The prospective employee is also to provide a list of all prior jobs and account for all gaps in employment in order to be considered.
- h. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources will note that references are completed satisfactorily on the new hire checklist for Diocesan office employees.
- i. Failure to complete references for a prospective employee for a Diocesan office will result in entry of new hire information into the HR system being delayed until proper reference checking is completed satisfactorily.
- j. In like fashion, prospective teachers and principals at diocesan schools must also comply with the above-described process.
- k. Employees starting work with an entity in the Diocesan HR system shall be notified that if there is a separation of employment from the Diocesan system, only the employee's name, employment dates, position title, and eligibility for rehire status will typically be released. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources, though, may provide additional information, at his or her discretion, according to the circumstances.
- l. Eligibility for rehire status is a required field to be answered when the hiring authority is filling out the electronic form and to remove a person from the HR system. A business-related and valid reason must be included when classifying a terminated employee as ineligible for rehire.

5. Reference checks for a new hire at locations other than Diocesan Offices:

- a. Administrative personnel at these locations are strongly urged to follow the same reference check steps described in procedure #4 above.
- b. The administrative person at the location who received the reference feedback information shall verify to the Diocesan Director of Human Resources whether or not references were checked and completed using the HR system data entry process described in #1 above.
- c. The same caution given to employees in 4.k. above will also be given to employees in non-Diocesan office locations.

6. Criminal background checks for new hires at all locations:

- a. All candidates for employment, even those who will have no contact with minors, will undergo a criminal background check before starting employment in accordance with Chancery Protocol 03-25.
- b. This shall be required when a job offer is extended to a prospective employee, and the job offer shall be contingent upon the prospective employee successfully completing the criminal background check. The prospective employee will be informed of this requirement in his or her letter of offer of employment.
- c. Whether or not a criminal background check has been completed will be verified in a mandatory field during the new employee data entry in the same manner described in Procedure #1 above.
- d. Anytime the Diocesan Director of Human Resources notes that a criminal background check has not been completed, he or she will deny approval and notify the hiring authority that the criminal background check must be completed prior to approval and moving the new hire to active status, and the prospective employee will not be permitted to start work until this is completed.
- e. In like fashion, unless approval is given by the Safe Environment Office, prospective

teachers and principals who have not complied with the above-described process will not be permitted to sign a contract and start work until this requirement has been satisfied.

- f. Persons residing in Ohio at least five years will undergo a background check with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification (BCI&I). Persons who have resided in Ohio less than five years will undergo a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) check as well as a BCI&I check.
- g. For information on sites where the BCI&I and FBI checks can be done, the prospective employee can be assisted by the Safe Environment Office (614-241- 2568).
- h. The Safe Environment Office will forward criminal background check results to the Diocesan Director of Human Resources or other hiring personnel when he or she receives the agency report.
- i. If the prospective employee has previously undergone a background check that is documented in the Diocesan database, that information may be used provided there has been no break in service longer than one year. If the break in service exceeds one year, a new background check will be required.
To obtain a certified copy of a background check conducted within the past calendar year, applicants may contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office at 877-224-0043 to request that a copy be sent to the Diocese of Columbus. To view Fast Fingerprints WebCheck locations, please visit the Safe Environment webpage: www.columbuscatholic.org/safe.
- j. If a criminal background check report has a no-record verification, the prospective employee may start work immediately. A no record verification means that the report sent to the Diocese by the BCI&I and FBI indicates that the person has no convictions documented on his or her record.
- k. If the background check indicates that the prospective employee has one or more convictions on his or her record, the Safe Environment Director will complete a Criminal Record Analysis sheet to determine the prospective employee's suitability for hire, in accordance with current Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations.
 - i. Final judgments shall be based on final dispositions of cases and not arrests.
 - ii. The questions to be considered are described in procedure #10 below.
 - iii. Safe Environment Team will collect and review all relevant information in order to assist in the final determination in these situations.
- l. Prospective employees who have a conviction that is on the automatic disqualifying list of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3319.31 and 3319.39 for working with minors shall not be hired for any job that brings them or potentially brings them into contact with minors. Disqualifying offenses under the ORC are listed in Youth Ministry Policy 200.10.
- m. If the conviction was for an offense that does not rise to the level established by diocesan policy and the ORC 3319.31 and 3319.39, the prospective employee who will have contact or potential contact with minors may start employment if the Safe Environment Office gives approval in accordance with the steps described in #10 below, taking into account whether or not the offense calls into question the prospective employee's judgment, reliability, suitability, professionalism, etc. The employer is not obligated to hire a prospective employee whose criminal conviction falls below the aforementioned ORC threshold. The Request for Exception to Policy Process is as described:

- i. The employee and/or volunteer must request the exception to policy through his/her parish, school, or agency.
 - ii. The request must include the requestor's statement of the facts and circumstances that led to the conviction of the disqualifying charge(s) and the disposition of the charges. The requestor may also describe any extenuating circumstances. The requestor should also state what he/she has done since the conviction to turn his/her life around. The requestor may attach any character references, if he/she chooses to do so.
 - iii. The request, and any supporting documents, is submitted to the parish, school, or agency where the individual is volunteering and/or working.
 - iv. The parish, school, or agency will review the individual's explanation of the charges and circumstances surrounded the offenses.
 - v. The agency, school, and/or agency will make a decision based on the letter and their experiences working and interacting with this person.
 - vi. If the decision is to not allow the person to work or volunteer the process ends here.
 - vii. If the decision is to allow the person to work/volunteer, then the location will forward the package to the Diocese of Columbus Safe Environment Office. The package must include the following:
 - viii. Request from individual requesting the exemption to policy, and explaining the facts and circumstances that led to the conviction.
 - ix. Letter from the pastor, principal, or director recommending approval of the request for the exception to policy. This letter should also explain why the pastor, principal, or director supports the request.
 - x. Description of the work the individual will be performing.
 - xi. Description of where and who the individual will come into contact with.
 - xii. Description of the contact the individual will have with children or other vulnerable populations.
 - xiii. The Safe Environment Office will prepare a Criminal Records Analysis.
 - xiv. This report will be reviewed by the Director of the Safe Environment Office and other appropriate Diocesan officials.
 - xv. Once a decision is made a letter of approval or disapproval will be sent to the requesting parish, school, or agency.
- n. Employees starting work in the Diocesan system are notified that their criminal background check information cannot, under state and federal law, be shared with entities outside the Diocesan system.

7. Reference checks for current or former employees at Diocesan offices:

- a. All inquiries from prospective employers, financial, or investigative groups regarding a current or former Diocesan office employee must be referred to the Diocesan Director of Human Resources.
- b. Active employees at Diocesan offices who are not authorized personnel cannot respond to any verbal or written requests regarding a reference or employment verification for a current or former employee. Active employees who are authorized personnel are to inform and consult with the Diocesan Director of Human Resources

before responding to such requests.

c. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources will review these requests and typically release only the name, employment dates, and position title. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources may provide additional information, at his or her discretion, which may include eligibility for continued employment status, according to the circumstances.

d. An employee or former employee who is the subject of such an inquiry may specifically request in writing that the Diocesan Director of Human Resources release information regarding work performance, attendance, etc. The entity may have a form that the current employee can sign authorizing what may be released, or the current employee may specify in the form of a written letter what can be released regarding him or her.

e. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources will have final say on determinations of a departing employee's eligibility for rehire status based on facts submitted by the employing entity at time of the employee's employment separation.

8. Reference checks for current or former employees at non-Diocesan office locations:

a. All inquiries from prospective employers, financial, or investigative groups regarding a current or former employee are to be handled only by authorized personnel (as defined in the list in this protocol that precedes the procedures). Non-authorized personnel must refer such requests to an authorized person.

b. Authorized personnel receiving such requests should consult with the Diocesan Director of Human Resources to be sure they are fully informed, based on information known to the Diocesan Director of Human Resources or to be researched by the Diocesan Director of Human Resources, before issuing any responses. It is imperative that this step be followed, assuring that a cohesive and comprehensive response is issued by authorized personnel.

c. After consultation with the Diocesan Director of Human Resources, authorized personnel will issue reference information in the same ways described in #7 above.

d. At non-Diocesan office locations, authorized personnel will have final say on determinations of a departing employee's eligibility for rehire status based on facts submitted by the employing entity at time of the employee's employment separation.

9. Criminal background checks and arrests of current or former employees at all locations:

a. As previously noted within procedure #6, civil law prohibits conveying criminal background check information to entities outside the Diocesan system. Entities or employees requesting this information must be instructed to work with the Ohio Attorney General's Office directly (877-224-0043) to obtain new criminal background check information for individuals.

b. If an active employee is arrested, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources shall be notified, and he or she shall review the situation in consultation with the employee's direct supervisors, the Safe Environment Office, and Chancery officials.

c. If an active employee is arrested, Diocesan legal counsel and the Diocesan Insurance Office shall be notified as well.

d. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources or authorized person may permit the employee who has been arrested to continue working while his or her case is litigated and resolved. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources or authorized person may also, if

- he or she deems it necessary, place the employee who had been arrested on paid or unpaid leave until the case is resolved.
- e. If an employee who was arrested and placed on unpaid leave is later exonerated and found not guilty and permitted to return to work, he or she shall receive the pay that had been withheld while on unpaid leave.
 - f. If a current employee is convicted of a crime following an arrest, the Safe Environment Office, in consultation with the employee's direct supervisors, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources, and Chancery officials, will perform the criminal record analysis described in procedure #10 below in order to determine whether or not the employee can continue working or is to have his or her employment or contract discontinued.
 - g. If, in the determination of the Safe Environment Office, the employee's position brought him or her into contact or potentially into contact with minors, and the employee's conviction was for a disqualifying offense under ORC 3319.31 and 3319.39, his or her employment or contract shall be terminated immediately upon conviction.
 - h. If an employee who has contact or potential contact with minors was convicted for an offense that is not disqualifying under ORC 3319.31 and 3319.39, the Safe Environment Office, in consultation with the employee's supervisors, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources, and Chancery officials may still determine, upon conclusion of the criminal record analysis, that the employee's employment or contract is to be terminated, particularly taking into consideration the Ohio Department of Education's standards of professional conduct for school personnel.
 - i. Requests for appeals will be handled in the same manner described in #6 above.

10. Criminal Records Analysis:

- a. Reviews of a potential or current employee's criminal record will be conducted by the Safe Environment Office who will answer the following questions (a separate form is available for answering this review):
 - i. Applicant/employee name.
 - ii. Position for which the applicant has applied or current employee holds.
 - iii. Date of analysis.
 - iv. Nature and gravity of offenses.
 - What is the person's conviction record?
 - Sentence or penalty.
 - Nature of crimes (e.g. theft, fraud, violence, property damage, deception, threats, etc.).
 - Gravity of offense (e.g. level of felony, misdemeanor, etc.).
 - v. Time.
 - Amount of time since offense.
 - Amount of time since release from incarceration or probation.
 - vi. Relevance of crime to job position.
 - Essential/important job duties.
 - Nature of work performed.
 - Circumstances of job performance (e.g. level of supervision, interaction with co-workers, vulnerable populations, minors, public, etc.).
 - Job performance environment (e.g. office, customer's premises, outdoor,

- private, home, etc.).
- vii. Additional comments/conclusions.
- viii. Reviewer's name.

References Diocese of Columbus Interview & New Employee Coversheet

ORC 3319.31 & 3319.39

Chancery Protocol 03-25

YMP Policy 200.10

SEP SOP 4

SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE (SEO) 100.10

The policies in this Manual apply to all employees of Diocesan offices, agencies, parishes, and schools. Additionally, they apply to volunteers serving in all programs involving minors at the Diocesan level, agencies, parishes, and schools. These programs include, but are not limited to:

- Preschools
- Schools
- Before and After School programs
- School extracurricular activities, PreK to high school, including athletic programs
- Parish schools of religion
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- Altar servers
- Vacation Bible School
- Children/youth choirs
- Christmas pageants
- Youth ministry programs
- Interparochial youth ministry events or gatherings
- Pastoral and catechetical ministry with adolescents in middle school or junior high school (if separate from the Parish School of Religion)
- Programs preparing minors for the Sacrament of Confirmation (if separate from the Parish School of Religion and/or other parish programs addressing sacrament preparation or Christian initiation)
- Parish-based Recreation Programs (all levels and activities)
 - This includes all programs under the Diocesan Recreation Association
- Parish festival activities geared for minors (e.g. “kiddy land”)
- Minors assisting at parish and school events such as pancake breakfasts, fish fries, spaghetti dinners, etc.
- Catholic Chartered Units of the Boy Scouts of America (all levels)
- Youth-Serving Organizations (Girl Scouts of the USA, American Heritage Girls, Troops of St George, Catholic Youth Summer Camp, Inc. [CYSC], etc.) using parish, school, or Diocesan facilities (all levels)

SE 200.10

POLICY REGARDING CIVILIAN CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS AND CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

This protocol replaces and supersedes Chancery Protocol 03/06.

Clergy, Employees, and Applicants to Clerical Formation

All parish, school, and diocesan employees, clergy, religious, applicants to formation for the priesthood or permanent diaconate, and volunteers must be fully compliant with Safe Environment requirements (which includes *Protecting God's Children*™ training and a civilian criminal background check) prior to the start of any service or ministry. All necessary background checks, training, and documentation must be completed and verified before any individual may engage in ministry or service in any capacity. Parishes, schools, and diocesan offices are responsible for ensuring that full compliance is met and documented prior to assigning any duties. This policy is applicable to lay employees, professed religious, clergy, and clergy candidates.

Catholic School Volunteers and Volunteers in Parish Programs/Ministries for Children and Youth

Every volunteer in a program or ministry for children and youth, regardless of their level of contact with children and youth, is required to complete a civilian criminal background check and participate in a *Protecting God's Children*™ training session. Duration of service does not mitigate compliance with this policy.

Examples: Catholic School volunteers, Parish School of Religion (PSR) volunteers, youth ministry volunteers, field-trip chaperones and drivers, Scout leaders, coaches and other recreation volunteers, Vacation Bible School volunteers, Children's Liturgy of the Word volunteers, pre-school volunteers, nursery volunteers

Other Parish Volunteers and Adults

All volunteers in a ministry without extended contact with minors or vulnerable adult populations are strongly encouraged to complete a civilian criminal background check and attend a *Protecting God's Children*™ training session prior to beginning any volunteer service. Participation in this training is considered an essential step in ensuring a safe environment for all children and youth. All parents and other interested adults are also encouraged to attend. The safety of our children is best protected when every adult is informed, prepared, and committed to maintaining a secure and vigilant parish community.

Examples: Lectors, ushers, festival workers, choir members, and so forth.

Civilian criminal background checks are completed through the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCII) and must be completed and passed successfully by the first day of a priest or deacon's assignment if he is from a Diocese other than Columbus or from a

religious order. Lay employees and volunteers' criminal background checks must be completed and passed successfully by the first day of employment or service in the parish, school, agency, or office under the authority of the Bishop of Columbus.

For any priest, deacon, religious sister or brother, or layperson arriving to work and/or to serve in the Diocese of Columbus from outside the United States who has never before been in the United States, he or she must undergo and successfully pass an international background check through Selection.com. Ohio BCI and FBI checks are not suitable to use for people who never have been in the United States before.

Anyone formally applying to be a candidate for the priesthood or permanent diaconate must have a completed and acceptable results of a civilian criminal background check through the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCII) prior to acceptance into formal formation. Anyone who has not been a legal resident of Ohio for the past consecutive 5-years is required to complete a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) civilian criminal background check. An FBI civilian criminal background check must at least be in process by the first day of one's employment or service to the parish or school.

In accordance with state and federal regulations, copies or transfers of completed civilian criminal background checks are only accepted from one parish or school in the Diocese of Columbus to another parish or school in the Diocese of Columbus. Copies of completed civilian background checks from individuals or other institutions are not acceptable, which is also in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.

A new background check must be conducted with acceptable results if a cleric, employee, volunteer, or clerical candidate has a gap of more than 1.5 years (18 months) in their employment, service, or formation in the Diocese.

Scenario	Background-Check Requirement
New hire	BCI (and FBI if not ≥ 5 years Ohio resident) must be completed before starting
Five-year renewal	Re-check within 30 days of the 5-year anniversary, and every 5 years thereafter
Break in service $> 1\frac{1}{2}$ years	New BCI (and FBI if needed) required before resuming employment or ministry
Lived outside Ohio during 5 years	Both BCI and FBI checks always required

Parishes and schools should exercise prudence when reviewing any offenses that are identified by a civilian criminal background check. Offenses that would prevent someone from serving in programs and ministries with minors include, but are not limited to:

- Abduction
- Aggravated assault
- Aggravated burglary
- Aggravated menacing
- Aggravated murder; specific intent to cause death
- Aggravated robbery
- Animal Cruelty
- Assault and/or Battery
- Burglary
- Carrying concealed weapons
- Child enticement
- Child stealing
- Compelling prostitution
- Contributing to the unruliness or delinquency of a child
- Corrupting another with drugs
- Corruption of a minor
- Disseminating matter harmful to juveniles
- Domestic violence
- Promoting prostitution (children)
- Prostitution: after positive HIV test
- Public indecency
- Rape
- Robbery
- Sexual battery
- Sexual imposition
- Trafficking in drugs
- Unlawful abortion
- Voluntary manslaughter
- Voyeurism
- Endangering children
- Failing to provide for functionally impaired person
- Felonious assault
- Felonious sexual penetration
- Funding of drug or marijuana trafficking
- Grooming
- Gross sexual imposition
- Having a weapon while under a disability
- Illegal administration or distribution of anabolic steroids
- Illegal manufacture of drugs or cultivation of marijuana
- Illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material or performance
- Importuning
- Improperly discharging a weapon at or near a school or dwelling
- Interference with custody
- Involuntary manslaughter
- Kidnapping
- Murder
- Pandering obscenity
- Pandering obscenity involving a minor
- Pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor
- Patient abuse, neglect
- Placing harmful objects in food or confection
- Possession of drugs (that is not a minor drug possession offense)
- Procuring

Child Protection Training for Clergy, Employees, Volunteers, and Clergy Applicants

New clergy, employees, volunteers, and clergy applicants must attend a *Protecting God's Children*™ training session prior to working with children and youth. Active clergy, employees, volunteers, and clergy applicants must attend and successfully complete all supplemental *Protecting God's Children*™ training components assigned by the Safe Environment Office.

The *Protecting God's Children*™ program includes not only information on the scope of child sexual abuse but a plan for its prevention at parishes and schools. Individuals who have attended child sexual abuse awareness programs from other institutions are still required to attend a *Protecting God's Children*™ training session unless he or she can provide documentation that the previously attended program covered the same subject material and the Chancery Office grants approval.

Persons that have participated in a *Protecting God's Children*™ program in another diocese can request that their former diocese transfer their training record to the Diocese of Columbus.

If an employee or volunteer moves from a parish or school in the Diocese of Columbus to another parish or school in the Diocese of Columbus, the new parish or school should notify the diocese to request that the training record of the employee or volunteer be transferred.

Due to the sensitive nature of the *Protecting God's Children*™ program, some victims of child sexual abuse may not feel comfortable attending a *Protecting God's Children*™ training session. Anyone in this particular situation may request to receive the materials needed for child protection training in an alternate way. These requests are made through the Diocesan Safe Environment Office. All requests for alternate child protection training for victims of child sexual abuse are kept confidential.

In extenuating circumstances ONLY, a grace period for completion of *Protecting God's Children*™ training may be requested through the Diocesan Safe Environment Office.

Child Protection Continuing Education for Clergy and Other Personnel

In addition to attending a *Protecting God's Children*™ training session, some clergy, employees, and volunteers are also required to receive continuing education for child sexual abuse prevention. This continuing education is provided in monthly training bulletins generated by VIRTUS. Persons in the following positions, whether paid or volunteer, are required to participate in this continuing education process: priests, deacons, seminarians, diaconate students, principals, assistant principals, directors or coordinators of religious education, and directors/coordinators of youth ministry. These individuals are encouraged to disseminate this information among their staff and volunteers.

Other individuals interested in participating in the continuing education process should contact the Safe Environment Office.

Authority to Interpret This Policy

Interpreting of this policy in unique circumstances or its application in unclear situations shall be made by or at least receive the prior approval of the Vicar General or his delegate.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE POLICIES

SEO 200.20

REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse is any non-accidental action that harms a minor — whether physical, emotional, sexual, or by neglect. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Engaging in sexual activity with a minor
- Denying a minor necessary food, shelter, education, medical care, or supervision
- Using restraint procedures on a minor that cause injury or pain
- Administering prescription drugs or medications without the supervision of a licensed physician
- Providing alcohol, tobacco, or controlled substances to a minor
- Committing any non-accidental act that threatens or results in injury or death of a minor

Mandated Reporting Responsibilities

All clergy, employees, and volunteers of the Diocese of Columbus — including those in parishes, Catholic schools, apostolates, and affiliated ministries — must immediately report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect.

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, do not wait. It is not your role to investigate or have definitive proof. Reporting is about reasonable suspicion, not certainty. Leave the investigation to the proper civil authorities.

How to Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect

Step 1: Contact your local county child protection agency.

Provide as much information as possible, including:

- The child's name and address
- The child's age (if known)
- The names and addresses of parents or caregivers
- The name and address of the suspected abuser (if available)
- The reason you suspect abuse or neglect
- Any additional details that may assist in the investigation

You may report anonymously, although including your name can help investigators if follow-up is needed. Your name will not be disclosed to the suspected abuser.

Note: You do not need all of this information to make a report. If you are unsure whether the situation warrants reporting, always err on the side of protecting the child. Children Services will assess the report to determine if it meets the criteria for investigation.

Ohio's Centralized Reporting Numbers

- For Children:
 - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provides a single phone number to report suspected child abuse or neglect statewide: 855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453)
- For Adults:
 - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provides a single phone number to report suspected adult abuse or neglect statewide: 855-OHIO-APS (855-644-6277)

These numbers will automatically direct you to the adult/child protection or law enforcement agency in your county.

If a Child Is in Immediate Danger

If you believe a child is in imminent danger of serious harm, call **911** immediately.

Online Exploitation or Human Trafficking

If you suspect that a child is being sexually exploited online (e.g., sextortion, grooming, trafficking), please report it to:

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)
www.CyberTipline.org – Available 24/7

Also notify your local law enforcement agency.

Clergy, Church Personnel, or Volunteer Abuse Allegations

- 1.) Immediately report to your county child protection agency or law enforcement
- 2.) Then notify the Diocesan Safe Environment Office so internal safeguarding procedures can begin and the Independent Review Board can be engaged.

Diocesan Reporting Contacts:

- Email: helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org
- 24/7 Emergency Safe Environment Reporting Line: 614-779-1966
- Toll-Free Victim Assistance Hotline: 1-866-448-0217

Safe Environment Office Contacts:

Meredith Gaul
Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator
614-241-2568, Option 3
mgaul@columbuscatholic.org

Megan Matthews
Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator
614-241-2568, Option 1
mmatthews@columbuscatholic.org

Laura Lewis
Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator
866-448-0217
llewis@columbuscatholic.org

Diocesan Commitment to Safety and Healing

The Diocese of Columbus is committed to making our churches, schools, and facilities places of prayer, safety, ministry, and healing. No child should ever experience abuse in a place meant to nurture faith and trust.

To ensure this, the Diocese has enacted a comprehensive Safe Environment Program, which includes training, background checks, screening procedures, and victim support. We also maintain a zero-tolerance policy toward abuse and are committed to full cooperation with civil authorities.

Each parish and school are required to have a copy of the full diocesan policies and procedures for addressing allegations of abuse by clergy or Church personnel, readily available for all staff and parishioners.

For more information and resources, including training and reporting guidance, visit:
www.columbuscatholic.org/safe

SE 200.30

ADULT CHAPERONES FOR YOUTH ACTIVITIES

All parishes, schools, and agencies must follow the Diocesan strategy of “two-deep” ministry with minors. This means that at least two (2) adults who are in full compliance with Diocesan safe environment policies must be present at all youth activities and in all situations involving minors. This includes, but is not limited to, transporting minors in motor vehicles for field trips, practices, sporting events, mission trips, retreats, and similar events.

This requirement does not apply when the driver is the parent or legal guardian of all minors in the motor vehicle.

For the purposes of this policy, “full compliance with Diocesan safe environment policies” means:

- The individual has a current criminal background check on file with the Diocesan Safe Environment Office; and
- The individual has completed VIRTUS *Protecting God’s Children*™ training.

When a one-on-one activity with a minor is necessary (e.g., counseling), such activity must occur in an open, visible, and interruptible setting. Care should be taken to provide a safe and confidential environment while maintaining appropriate boundaries and standards of prudence.

All adult chaperones must be at least 21 years of age.

Supervision and Chaperone Ratios

For all parish, school, or agency-sponsored activities involving minors, the following adult-to-minor supervision ratios must be followed:

- On-site activities: One (1) adult per ten (10) minors
- Off-site day trips: One (1) adult per eight (8) minors
- Overnight activities: One (1) adult per six (6) minors

Activities defined as: Vacation Bible School, Catechesis classes, or any activity where volunteers are in charge of the children, and not a licensed teacher functioning as a teacher, the ratio above applies. This excludes daycares and aftercare programs who follow other licensing agencies. This ratio does still

require TWO DEEP Policy to be followed.

Ratio Definition	Ratio Following Two Deep Policy
On site 1:10	2 adults ALWAYS and MAXIMUM 20 minors
Off-site 1:8	2 adults ALWAYS and MAXIMUM 16 minors
Overnight 1:6	2 adults ALWAYS and MAXIMUM 12 minors

In addition, the gender of adult chaperones must closely correspond to the gender of the minors participating. If both male and female minors are present, there must be both male and female chaperones. This is particularly important for overnight activities to ensure proper supervision and boundaries.

Overnight Activities and Lodging Requirements

For overnight activities where private rooms are used, an adult chaperone must never share a room with a minor. The only exception is when the adult is the parent or legal guardian of the minor, and no other persons are sharing the room.

An adult chaperone must never enter a minor's room unless it is absolutely necessary. If circumstances require entry, the chaperone must be accompanied by another adult, and the door must remain open for the duration of their presence in the room.

Both adult chaperones entering a room should be of the same sex as the minor(s) in the room. If this is not possible, one male and one female chaperone may be present.

A minor must never be invited or instructed to enter the room of an adult chaperone under any circumstance.

SE 200.40

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

- Employees and volunteers work collaboratively with the pastor and/or other supervisors and associates in ministry.
- Employees and volunteers faithfully represent and practice the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
- Employees and volunteers are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities.
- Employees and volunteers respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their own personal form of spirituality normative.
- Employees and volunteers recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful of anyone or any group.
- Employees and volunteers serve all people without regard to gender, creed, national origin, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political beliefs.
- Employees and volunteers act to ensure all persons have access to the resources, services and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.

- Employees and volunteers are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative.
- Employees and volunteers are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministry conscientiously, zealously, and diligently.
- Employees and volunteers exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- Employees and volunteers respect confidentiality.
- Employees and volunteers adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy and procedure concerning the reporting of neglect, suspected abuse or when physical harm could come to the person or to a third party.
- Employees and volunteers support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of minors.
- Employees and volunteers are aware they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, they will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power. Physical, sexual, or romantic relationships between an adult volunteer and a minor are unethical, illegal, and are prohibited.
- Employees and volunteers model healthy and positive behaviors with minors. Procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with minors is unethical, illegal and is prohibited.
- Employees and volunteers are aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
- Employees and volunteers are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- Employees and volunteers are aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

SE 200.43

DISSEMINATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Parishes, schools, and diocesan agencies shall actively make their respective communities aware of the Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers and ensure that it is readily accessible to all interested parishioners, parents, guardians, staff, and volunteers.

To promote transparency and support a culture of accountability, *the following are recommended practices* for sharing and promoting the Code of Conduct within the community:

- **Website Posting:** It is recommended that the Code of Conduct be posted prominently on the parish, school, or agency website in a location that is easy to find, such as under “About Us,” “Safe Environment,” or “Volunteer Information.”
- **Printed Copies:** Offices are encouraged to make printed copies available upon request for those who do not have internet access or prefer a physical version.
- **Regular Communication:** Including occasional reminders or highlights from the Code of Conduct in parish bulletins, school newsletters, or community emails can help keep the policy top of mind and reinforce shared values.
- **Orientation and Formation:** Providing the Code of Conduct as part of new staff and

volunteer orientation and incorporating it into ongoing training sessions can help ensure that all individuals understand their responsibilities and expected behavior.

These efforts help to foster a shared understanding of appropriate conduct and contribute to a safe and respectful environment for all members of the community.

SE 200.61

GATHERINGS/ACTIVITIES AT PRIVATE RESIDENCES

Many well-intentioned employees and volunteers have a desire to open their homes to minors. Even with the best of intentions, this would put minors at risk by making it acceptable in the mind of a minor to enter the residence of an adult. This could later be exploited by another adult whose intentions are not altruistic.

It is the policy of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus that no parish /school/agency sponsored gatherings, events, or activities take place at private residences.

This policy is designed to protect both minors and adult youth ministry leaders. It ensures accessibility and transparency of our programs for minors and helps establish a safe environment for everyone involved.

SE 200.70

PARENTAL OBSERVATION AND OTHER VISITORS

Parents must be welcomed to observe all activities sponsored by parishes/schools/agencies. While efforts should be made to create an environment where minors are comfortable expressing themselves, "...the right and duty of the parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable." (CCC 2221).

In an effort to provide a safe environment for all minors, each parish/school/agency shall have a written policy detailing the procedures visitors must follow when visiting a program. This policy must minimally address the following elements:

1. Sign-in procedures,
2. Advance notice necessary to observe an activity,
3. Procedure for accompanying the visitor to and from observation area.

SE 200.80

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF YOUTH

Each program for minors shall provide an organized program of health services designed to identify problems and coordinate health resources of the local community. Minimally the health services of the programs shall include:

- a) Procedures for dealing with immediate treatment of minors in cases of emergency.

These procedures shall include providing the parent (s) or guardian (s) of minors with a written form for authorizing emergency medical treatment.

- b) Procedures for emergency situations: fire drills, or rapid dismissals, and tornado drills.
- c) Records of fire drills and seasonal tornado drills.
- d) Emergency procedures posted in meeting rooms and available to parents, minors, and ministry team members.
- e) Emergency telephone numbers posted by office telephones.
- f) Supervision of parish/school/agency grounds, recreational areas, and other facilities when scheduled for use by minors.
- g) First aid facilities and materials.
- h) Keeping a file of written incident reports.

SE 200.81

THREATS TO WELFARE AND SAFETY

No minor will use, possess, handle, transmit or conceal any object which is or can be considered a weapon or instrument of violence. Objects which are explosive or incendiary in nature, or any object reasonably determined to be a threat to the safety or security of any person, are prohibited on parish and school premises, and at all parish/school/agency functions.

SE 200.82

BULLYING

The Diocese of Columbus programs for minors and their ministry teams shall not tolerate any bullying on parish grounds or at any program activity on or off site.

Bullying is a pattern of abuse over time and involves a person being “picked on”. Bullying includes physical intimidation or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name-calling; threatening looks, gestures, or actions; cruel rumors; false accusations; and social isolation.

The Diocese expects ministry team members who observe or become aware of an act of bullying to take immediate, appropriate steps to intervene. If a team member believes that his/her intervention has not resolved the matter, or if the bullying persists, he/she shall report it to his/her supervisor for further investigation.

The Diocese expects minors and parents who become aware of an act of bullying on parish grounds or at any program activity on or off site to report it to the ministry coordinator or supervisor for further investigation. The coordinator or supervisor will contact parents of the aggressor and the victim. This investigation may include interviews with minors, parents, team members, parish staff, and reviewing records.

Consequences for minors who bully others should include counseling, parent conference, and/or suspension from activities, depending on the results of the investigation.

No retaliation shall be taken against a person who reports bullying.

Parishes/school/agencies shall have a policy on bullying, which incorporates the essentials of this policy, printed in their parent/student handbook.

SE 300.30

HARASSMENT POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES AND ADULT EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1. Harassment can take many forms. Harassment can occur at any parish/school/agency activity, and/or can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at programs sponsored by the parish/school/agency at other locations. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age, or disability or other protected characteristics.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a spiritually enriching environment, in all programs and activities, free of all forms of harassment and intimidation. **No minor participant, volunteer adult leader, or parish staff member - male or female - should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical.**

2. Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment is prohibited. Sexual harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Offensive sexual flirtations, advances, propositions;
 - Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual or gender-based nature;
 - Explicit or degrading sexual or gender-based comments about another individual or his or her appearance;
 - The display or circulation of sexually explicit or suggestive writing, pictures or objects;
 - Any offensive or physical conduct which shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of gender or sex;
 - Graffiti of a sexual nature;
 - Fondling oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others;
 - Spreading rumors about or categorizing others as to sexual activity.
3. Sexual harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature - it also includes harassment that is based on **gender**, as that term is recognized under Catholic Church teaching. Gender-based harassment, which is also prohibited, is conduct that would not occur except for the sex of the person involved. An example would be referring to a woman by or as a female body part, or a demeaning sex-based term, or treating people differently because of their gender. The same prohibitions apply with regard to inflammatory or offensive comments or conduct which are based upon race, color, age, religion, disability, or national origin. In short, working relationships between employees and volunteers must be based on mutual respect.

Sexual harassment also includes the taking of, or refusal to take, any personnel or other action on the basis of a person's submission to or refusal of sexual overtures. No person should so much as imply that an individual's "cooperation" or submission to unwelcome sexual activity will have any effect on the individual's employment, assignment, compensation, advancement, development, program, evaluation, participation in parish programs or activities, or any other condition of employment or achievement.

Not all physical conduct is necessarily considered sexual in nature. (For example, a coach hugging a student after an accomplishment, a youth minister consoling a minor with an injury or physical conduct during athletic events would not be considered sexual conduct.) However, peer-based sexual harassment is a form of prohibited conduct where the harassing conduct creates a hostile environment.

4. A sexually hostile environment can be created by a parish/school/agency employee, volunteer, minor participant, or visitor to the parish/school/agency activity.
5. Any person who believes he/she was subjected to unlawful harassment or intimidation must contact either the (a) program administrator, (b) pastor, or (c) Director of the Safe Environment Office. A complaint must be filed in writing. In the event that an individual alleges harassment by a program administrator or a pastor, the individual may file the complaint with the diocesan Director of the Safe Environment Office. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and the person initiating the complaint will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.
6. Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action against any program administrator, volunteer, or staff engaging in harassment. The response shall take into account the individuals and circumstances. Such action may include, depending on the circumstances, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of services.
7. No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated. The Diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.

PARISH/SCHOOL/AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Periodically each parish/school/agency shall give staff and volunteers a copy of the Harassment Policy. It is recommended that a Harassment Policy Verification Form be signed and returned.
2. Each parish/school/agency program shall follow Diocesan procedures for timely investigation and response to complaints.
3. Each parish/school/agency shall periodically train program administrators, staff and volunteers to ensure that they understand which types of behavior constitute harassment, the

prevention of harassment, and how they should respond in the event of experiencing such behavior. Records are to be kept of training dates and names of those in attendance.

4. Each parish/school/agency program shall include the Harassment Policy in materials distributed to the program's staff, employees, and volunteers.

SE 300.31

HARASSMENT POLICY FOR STUDENTS AND MINOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1. **Harassment** is defined as verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, cuts down, or shows hostility toward a person because of his or her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability (and other characteristics protected by law).

Harassment can take many forms and can occur at any parish activity. It can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at youth programs off-site.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a safe environment free from all forms of harassment and intimidation. No one (minor or adult) should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct of any kind.

2. **Sexual harassment** is unwelcome attention of a sexual nature. It may take different forms, including:
 - Inappropriate touching (brushing up against, grabbing, patting, or pinching in a sexual manner.)
 - Making comments about a person's body, clothing, or sexual behavior
 - Spreading sexual rumors about someone
 - Continually asking someone out when they have communicated a lack of interest
 - Making sexual jokes, gestures, or remarks (in person or in "cyberspace" – instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, etc.)
 - Intimidation (blocking or cornering someone in a sexual way)
 - Assault (pulling clothing off or down, forcing someone to do something sexual such as kissing)
 - Fondling oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others
3. **Gender Harassment.** Sex harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature; it also includes harassment that is based on a person's gender, as that term is recognized under Catholic Church teaching. An example would be referring to a girl by a female body part or a demeaning sex-based term. This behavior is prohibited. Treating people differently because of their gender is prohibited.
4. **Hostile environment harassment** occurs when unwelcome sexual conduct is so severe

and pervasive (repeated) that it limits a person's ability to benefit from or enjoy the parish program or activity. A sexually hostile environment can be created by anyone: a parish employee, adult volunteer, minor volunteer, minor participant, or a visitor to the parish activity.

5. If a minor sees harassment of any kind occurring (no matter who the harasser is—student, visitor, catechist, etc.,) they should immediately tell a trusted adult staff member or volunteer so that they can intervene and begin the appropriate reporting steps as outlined in diocesan policy.
6. If a minor believes he/she is a victim of sexual harassment, he should tell a trusted adult (principal, teacher counselor, youth minister, pastor, director of religious education, or a parent) to file a formal complaint.
7. Symptoms of a victim of sexual harassment may include:
 - Feel angry, embarrassed, frustrated, scared or depressed
 - Feel hopeless to stop the harassment
 - Not feel good about yourself
 - Fear that your reputation will be destroyed
 - Go out of your way to avoid the harasser(s)
 - Experience headaches, stomach aches, or sleeping or eating problems because of the stress caused by the harassment
8. Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action as outlined in diocesan policy.
9. Retaliation against or “getting even” with anyone who reports harassment will not be tolerated. The diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.

PARISH/SCHOOL/AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Periodically each parish/school/agency shall give staff and volunteers a copy of the Harassment Policy. It is recommended that a Harassment Policy Verification Form be signed and returned.
2. Each parish/school/agency program shall follow diocesan procedures for timely investigation and response to complaints.
3. Each parish/school/agency shall periodically train program administrators, staff, and volunteers to ensure that they understand which types of behavior constitute harassment, the prevention of harassment, and how they should respond in the event of experiencing such behavior. Records are to be kept of training dates and names of those in attendance.
4. Each parish/school/agency program shall include the Harassment Policy in materials

distributed to the program's staff/volunteers.

SE 400.00

COMMUNICATIONS WITH MINORS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATIONS WITH MINORS

Background and Introduction

“The new communication media, if adequately understood and exploited, can offer priests and all pastoral care workers a wealth of data which was difficult to access before, and facilitates forms of collaboration and increased communion that were previously unthinkable. If wisely used, with the help of experts in technology and the communications culture, the new media can become – for priests and for pastoral care workers – a valid and effective instrument for authentic and profound evangelization and communion.”

Pope Benedict XVI

The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World

New Media at the Service of the World

Message for the 2010 World Communications Day

While inculturation of the Gospel is essential, and we must always seek new and relevant methods of evangelization and catechesis, it is important that we make every effort to ensure the safety of both producers and consumers of communications, especially when minors are involved. The encountering and accompaniment of God's people and the safety and protection of His flock requires responsible, focused, and intentional use of new and yet-to-be-developed technologies.

SE 400.10

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Local policy must always be in alignment with Diocesan policies. Materials used to communicate local and diocesan policies will be reviewed and revised as needed. Such materials will be published and distributed.

When sending out any form of communication, verbal or written, and when posting, commenting, or replying to internet sites, it is prohibited to use obscene, harassing, derogatory, defamatory, or otherwise potentially scandalous comments, links, and/or images which reflect, discredit, or cause embarrassment to the Catholic Church, Diocese of Columbus, or any person or group of individuals.

Posts, comments, and/or replies must never contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church.

It is prohibited to divulge, without verifiable consent of a parent or guardian, any information that would jeopardize the safety or well-being of any person or group of individuals. This

includes but is not limited to pictures of any person younger than the age of 18. Personal identifiable and contact information may not be shared with: vendors, organizations, other parishes, schools, or individuals outside the youth ministry program. Personal identifiable and contact information may be shared within the parish with parish administrators who require the information for administrative purposes only. Also prohibited is the posting of full names, home address, email address, telephone numbers, or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a person younger than the age of 18. Verifiable consent may take the form of a personally identifiable information release form (See 400.15) or permission from the parent or guardian (See 400.33).

It is prohibited to disclose in a post, comment, or reply, information that is understood to be held in confidence by the Diocese of Columbus.

Recognition and respect of intellectual property should be maintained at all times. Care must be taken so as not to infringe upon the exclusive rights of others, musical, literary, and or artistic works. It is the responsibility of the individual to abide by all copyright laws of the United States of America.

Enforcement

Failure to comply with any of the guidelines and provisions outlined here will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination. The Diocese of Columbus reserves the right to change this policy at any time and at its discretion. The interpretation and administration of this policy will be made by Diocesan officials in light of changing circumstances and events.

SE 400.11

COMMUNICATING WITH MINORS

- An adult employee or volunteer may not initiate a one-to-one private communication with a minor. One-on-one or private communication between non-related adult employees or volunteers and minors is prohibited. As required and described by Policy 200.30 all interactions in person and through technology must meet the 2-deep strategy. If a minor initiates such communication, then the adult must move the conversation to a public platform and retain a record of the communication. All interaction and communication must be open, public, transparent, and appropriate.
- Medium of communication must allow for accountability and ability to retain records of communications, therefore no “anonymous” apps or platforms, and no apps or platforms which automatically delete communications are permitted.
- Communications should come via Professional Ministry account/profile, phone (mobile/work), email, or physical address; NEVER via a personal account/profile, phone (mobile/home), email, or physical address. If the employee or volunteer adult is not issued a mobile ministry phone, then communication should be through a public platform.
- Adult employees and volunteers must not initiate or accept “friend” requests, “follows”, or the like with minors related to personal social media platforms or apps.

- Parents should not only be invited but strongly encouraged to sign up for communications.
- High school-aged minors who serve as employee or volunteer leaders or assistants with minors under the age of 13 must conform to the above policies in all communications pertaining to the ministry. Additionally, minors must abide by Policy 300.31 regarding conduct with peers and those of younger age.

SE 400.12

USE OF CELL PHONE GUIDELINES

As indicated in Policy 400.11, communications with minors should come via Professional Ministry phone (mobile/work) or online third-party platform; NEVER via a personal phone (mobile/home). See the Parish Resource Manual for Youth Ministry for practical tips and examples of online third-party platforms.

If the parish does not provide a professional ministry mobile phone, there should be a remuneration of expenses incurred using a third-party account for professional communications via a personal data plan.

Adult employees and volunteers should never distribute their personal cell phone number to minors outside of necessity for emergency situations that may arise during a field trip (see Policy 400.31). It is strongly recommended that, even in these emergency situations, the minor is given a professional ministry mobile number or, if that is not available, an online third-party platform is used for messaging and calls.

Professional ministry mobile phones and third-party accounts used to message and make phone calls with minors should be monitored by at least two (2) adult employees.

If a minor initiates a one-on-one conversation with a non-related adult employee or volunteer via cell phone call or text message, then the adult should conclude the conversation, or move the conversation to a public forum or an in person, safe environment compliant meeting within three (3) or fewer messages. A record of any private messages or communications with minors via cell phone should be made and retained for a period of seven (7) years.

SE 400.13

ESTABLISHING AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Establish and utilize official social media accounts and/or pages for parish or ministry communication that do not allow minors access to personal accounts and/or profiles of adult leaders.
- Approval from the Parish Coordinator of Youth Ministry, their supervisor, and the pastor must be obtained before creating a new social media account and/or page for the parish or ministry. There must be at least two adult administrators and at least one of these should be the Parish Coordinator of Youth Ministry or DRE, their supervisor, or the pastor.
- All social media sites and pages should be public and transparent.
- Social media involving the participation of minors must be equally accessible to the minor's

parent or guardian. The parents and guardians should be made aware of the site or page and both allowed and strongly encouraged to participate.

- Social media sites or pages belonging to the parish or ministry must be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. There shall be no posting of inappropriate or foul language, photos, or videos, and no verbal or emotional harassment (see 300.30 and 300.31). There shall be no posting of confidential or proprietary information, unauthorized use of trademarks or logos, or promotion or solicitation from outside businesses. As stated in Policy 400.10, it is prohibited to post and personally identifiable information pertaining to a minor without the written consent of a parent or guardian.
- Adult employees and volunteers must refrain from providing any form of counseling to a minor via a social media platform. An adult employee or volunteer may not initiate a one-to-one private communication with a minor via social media. If a minor initiates such communication via social media, then the adult must move the conversation to a public platform and retain a record of the communication for seven (7) years.

SE 400.14

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION RELEASE FORMS

Information regarding minors not considered personally identifiable information will be released in various formats, including websites, unless a parent/guardian notifies the parish/school that such information is not to be released regarding his/her child. Information not considered personally identifiable includes names of minors, grade level, activities, sports, awards, and date of graduation.

Personally identifiable information for a minor may only be published or shared with the written consent of a parent/guardian. Record of consent must be retained on file for seven (7) years or until the consent is revoked by the parent or guardian. Personally identifiable information includes photographs, digital images, or recordings with and without names, addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, social media accounts, and personal characteristics (height, weight, etc.).

See form in Appendix.

SE 400.20

FIELD TRIPS

A field trip is defined as a school or parish sponsored activity supervised by school or parish personnel and/or adult volunteers which occurs off site.

No minor may participate unless a signed parent permission and liability waiver form for the specific event is received by the parish prior to the field trip. A standardized parent permission and liability waiver form is available from the diocese (See 400.33).

The standardized form must be completed by the parent/guardian in its entirety and no content of the form may be omitted or edited in any way. Additional fields requesting additional

information (such as shirt size or meal choices) may be added, so long as no other fields are removed or edited in any way.

This form may be completed in an online format and submitted by the parent as long as the original content is in place and the parent/guardian checks the approval boxes.

If a minor registers at a parish or diocesan event or field trip and does not bring the completed form, the adult leaders in charge may refuse participation or call the parent/guardian and take the information on the form over the phone and note the parent/guardian verbal consent. Two adult leaders must be present and sign the form to verify parent/guardian consent.

Record of parental consent and permission must be retained on file for seven (7) years. Any parish records with the name, address, e-mail, home phone number or mobile phone number, or any other personally identifiable information as well as private information like health insurance or medical information of a minor, must be kept in a secure location at all times.

No adult participant or chaperone may participate unless a signed adult permission and liability waiver form for the specific event is received by the parish prior to the field trip. A standardized adult permission and liability waiver form is available from the diocese (See 400.35).

The standardized form must be completed by the participating adult in its entirety and no content of the form may be omitted or edited in any way. Additional fields requesting additional information (such as shirt size or meal choices) may be added, so long as no other fields are removed or edited in any way.

This form may be completed in an online format and submitted by the participating adult as long as the original content is in place and the adult checks the approval boxes.

Record of adult permission and liability must be retained on file for seven (7) years. Any parish records with the name, address, e-mail, home phone number or mobile phone number, or any other personally identifiable information as well as private information like health insurance or medical information, must be kept in a secure location at all times.

Whenever possible, bus transportation should be provided. If a private passenger vehicle is used, all drivers and vehicles must be in full compliance with the *Diocesan Financial Policy Manual* (1504.0).

SE 400.21

OVERNIGHT EVENTS AND TRIPS

Trips or events including minors which extend during the evening and require staying overnight are subject to the approval of the pastor/principal/director or his/her representative.

Approval may only be given when such an event supplements or enriches parish/school/agency programs, e.g. retreat experiences, youth conferences, etc.

The directives in Policy 400.20 - Field Trips also apply to overnight trips and events.

SE 400.22**REGISTRATION/PERMISSION/RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT**

The following registration/permission/release form must be signed and dated by the parent/guardian and student for the specific event prior to the field trip or overnight activity as defined in Policy 400.31. No language in the registration/permission/release may be edited or removed.

Versions of this form in English and Spanish accessible for print can be found in the Appendix.

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

The revised *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was developed by the Ad Hoc Committee for Sexual Abuse of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was approved by the full body of U.S. Catholic bishops at its June 2005 General Meeting, and this second revision was approved at the June 2011 General Meeting. The revised *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* was developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse of the USCCB and by the Vatican-U.S. Bishops' Mixed Commission on Sex Abuse Norms. They were approved by the full body of bishops at its June 2005 General Meeting, received the subsequent *recognitio* of the Holy See on January 1, 2006, and were promulgated May 5, 2006. The revised *Statement of Episcopal Commitment* was developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Bishops' Life and Ministry of the USCCB. It was approved by the full body of U.S. Catholic bishops at its November 2005 General Meeting and then again in 2011. This revised edition, containing all three documents, is authorized for publication by the undersigned.

—Msgr. David J. Malloy, STD
General Secretary, USCCB

Preamble

Since 2002, the Church in the United States has experienced a crisis without precedent in our times. The sexual abuse of children and young people by some deacons, priests, and bishops, and the ways in which these crimes and sins were addressed, have caused enormous pain, anger, and confusion. As bishops, we have acknowledged our mistakes and our roles in that suffering, and we apologize and take responsibility again for too often failing victims and the Catholic people in the past. From the depths of our hearts, we bishops express great sorrow and profound regret for what the Catholic people have endured.

Again, with this 2011 revision of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, we re-affirm our deep commitment to creating a safe environment within the Church for children and youth. We have listened to the profound pain and suffering of those victimized by sexual abuse and will continue to respond to their cries. We have agonized over the sinfulness, the criminality, and the breach of trust perpetrated by some members of the clergy. We have determined as best we can the extent of the problem of this abuse of minors by clergy in our country, as well as commissioned a study of the causes and context of this problem.

We continue to have a special care for and a commitment to reaching out to the victims of sexual abuse and their families. The damage caused by sexual abuse of minors is devastating and long-lasting. We apologize to them for the grave harm that has been inflicted on them, and we offer our help for the future. The loss of trust that is often the consequence of such abuse becomes even more tragic when it leads to a loss of the faith that we have a sacred duty to foster. We make our own the words of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II: that the sexual abuse of young people is “by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an

appalling sin in the eyes of God” (Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers, April 23, 2002).

Along with the victims and their families, the entire Catholic community in this country has suffered because of this scandal and its consequences. In the last nine years, the intense public scrutiny of the minority of the ordained who have betrayed their calling has caused the vast majority of faithful priests and deacons to experience enormous vulnerability to being misunderstood in their ministry and even to the possibility of false accusations. We share with them a firm commitment to renewing the image of the vocation to Holy Orders so that it will continue to be perceived as a life of service to others after the example of Christ our Lord.

We, who have been given the responsibility of shepherding God’s people, will, with his help and in full collaboration with all the faithful, continue to work to restore the bonds of trust that unite us. Words alone cannot accomplish this goal. It will begin with the actions we take in our General Assembly and at home in our dioceses and eparchies.

We feel a particular responsibility for “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18) which God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, has given us. The love of Christ impels us to ask forgiveness for our own faults but also to appeal to all—to those who have been victimized, to those who have offended, and to all who have felt the wound of this scandal—to be reconciled to God and one another.

Perhaps in a way never before experienced, we have felt the power of sin touch our entire Church family in this country; but as St. Paul boldly says, God made Christ “to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). May we who have known sin experience as well, through a spirit of reconciliation, God’s own righteousness. We know that after such profound hurt, healing and reconciliation are beyond human capacity alone. It is God’s grace and mercy that will lead us forward, trusting Christ’s promise: “for God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26).

In working toward fulfilling this responsibility, we have relied first of all on Almighty God to sustain us in faith and in the discernment of the right course to take. We have received fraternal guidance and support from the Holy See that has sustained us in this time of trial.

We have relied on the Catholic faithful of the United States. Nationally and in each diocese, the wisdom and expertise of clergy, religious, and laity have contributed immensely to confronting the effects of the crisis and have taken steps to resolve it. We are filled with gratitude for their great faith, for their generosity, and for the spiritual and moral support that we have received from them.

We acknowledge and affirm the faithful service of the vast majority of our priests and deacons and the love that their people have for them. They deservedly have our esteem and that of the Catholic people for their good work. It is regrettable that their committed ministerial witness has been overshadowed by this crisis.

In a special way, we acknowledge those victims of clergy sexual abuse and their families who have trusted us enough to share their stories and to help us appreciate more fully the consequences of this reprehensible violation of sacred trust.

Let there now be no doubt or confusion on anyone's part: For us, your bishops, our obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve.

As we work to restore trust, we are reminded how Jesus showed constant care for the vulnerable. He inaugurated his ministry with these words of the Prophet Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. (Lk 4:18-19)*

In Matthew 25, the Lord, in his commission to his apostles and disciples, told them that whenever they show mercy and compassion to the least ones, they show it to him.

Jesus extended this care in a tender and urgent way to children, rebuking his disciples for keeping them away from him: "Let the children come to me" (Mt 19:14). And he uttered a grave warning that for anyone who would lead the little ones astray, it would be better for such a person "to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Mt 18:6).

We hear these words of the Lord as prophetic for this moment. With a firm determination to restore the bonds of trust, we bishops recommit ourselves to a continual pastoral outreach to repair the breach with those who have suffered sexual abuse and with all the people of the Church.

In this spirit, over the last nine years, the principles and procedures of the *Charter* have been integrated into church life.

- The Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection provides the focus for a consistent, ongoing, and comprehensive approach to creating a secure environment for young people throughout the Church in the United States.
- The Secretariat also provides the means for us to be accountable for achieving the goals of the *Charter*, as demonstrated by its annual reports on the implementation of the *Charter* based on independent compliance audits.
- The National Review Board is carrying on its responsibility to assist in the assessment of diocesan compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

- The descriptive study of the nature and scope of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy in the United States, commissioned by the National Review Board, has been completed. The resulting study, examining the historical period 1950-2002, by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice provides us with a powerful tool not only to examine our past but also to secure our future against such misconduct.
- The U.S. bishops charged the National Review Board to oversee the completion of the *Causes and Context* study.
- Victims' assistance coordinators are in place throughout our nation to assist dioceses in responding to the pastoral needs of those who have been injured by abuse.
- Diocesan/eparchial bishops in every diocese are advised and greatly assisted by diocesan review boards as the bishops make the decisions needed to fulfill the *Charter*.
- Safe environment programs are in place to assist parents and children—and those who work with children—in preventing harm to young people. These programs continually seek to incorporate the most useful developments in the field of child protection.

Through these steps and many others, we remain committed to the safety of our children and young people.

While it seems that the scope of this disturbing problem of sexual abuse of minors by clergy has been reduced over the last decade, the harmful effects of this abuse continue to be experienced both by victims and dioceses.

Thus, it is with a vivid sense of the effort which is still needed to confront the effects of this crisis fully and with the wisdom gained by the experience of the last six years that we have reviewed and revised the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. We now reaffirm that we will assist in the healing of those who have been injured, will do all in our power to protect children and young people, and will work with our clergy, religious, and laity to restore trust and harmony in our faith communities, as we pray for God's kingdom to come, here on earth, as it is in heaven.

To make effective our goals of a safe environment within the Church for children and young people and of preventing sexual abuse of minors by clergy in the future, we, the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, have outlined in this *Charter* a series of practical and pastoral steps, and we commit ourselves to taking them in our dioceses and eparchies.

To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors

ARTICLE 1. Dioceses/eparchies are to reach out to victims/survivors and their families and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being. The first obligation of the Church with regard to the victims is for healing and reconciliation. Each

diocese/eparchy is to continue its outreach to every person who has been the victim of sexual abuse* as a minor by anyone in church service, whether the abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past. This outreach may include provision of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services agreed upon by the victim and the diocese/eparchy.

Through pastoral outreach to victims and their families, the diocesan/eparchial bishop or his representative is to offer to meet with them, to listen with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns, and to share the “profound sense of solidarity and concern” expressed by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers (April 23, 2002). Pope Benedict XVI, too, in his address to the U.S. bishops in 2008 said of the clergy sexual abuse crisis, “It is your God-given responsibility as pastors to bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust, to foster healing, to promote reconciliation and to reach out with loving concern to those so seriously wronged.”

We bishops and eparchs commit ourselves to work as one with our brother priests and deacons to foster reconciliation among all people in our dioceses/eparchies. We especially commit ourselves to work with those individuals who were themselves abused and the communities that have suffered because of the sexual abuse of minors that occurred in their midst.

ARTICLE 2. Dioceses/eparchies are to have policies and procedures in place to respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred. Dioceses/eparchies are to have a competent person or persons to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report having been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel. The procedures for those making a complaint are to be readily available in printed form in the principal languages in which the liturgy is celebrated in the diocese/eparchy and be the subject of public announcements at least annually.

Dioceses/eparchies are also to have a review board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the bishop/eparch. The majority of its members are to be lay persons not in the employ of the diocese/eparchy (see Norm 5 in *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, 2006). This board is to advise the diocesan/eparchial bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of a cleric’s suitability for ministry. It is regularly to review diocesan/eparchial policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors. Also, the board can review these matters both retrospectively and prospectively and give advice on all aspects of responses in connection with these cases.

ARTICLE 3. Dioceses/eparchies are not to enter into settlements which bind the parties to confidentiality unless the victim/survivor requests confidentiality and this request is noted in the text of the agreement.

To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors

ARTICLE 4. Dioceses/eparchies are to report an allegation of sexual abuse of a person who is a minor to the public authorities. Dioceses/eparchies are to comply with all applicable

civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities and cooperate in their investigation in accord with the law of the jurisdiction in question.

Dioceses/eparchies are to cooperate with public authorities about reporting cases even when the person is no longer a minor.

In every instance, dioceses/eparchies are to advise victims of their right to make a report to public authorities and support this right.

ARTICLE 5. We affirm the words of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers: “There is no place in the priesthood or religious life for those who would harm the young.”

Sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric is a crime in the universal law of the Church (CIC, c. 1395 §2; CCEO, c. 1453 §1). Because of the seriousness of this matter, jurisdiction has been reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (*Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, AAS 93, 2001). Sexual abuse of a minor is also a crime in all civil jurisdictions in the United States.

Diocesan/eparchial policy is to provide that for even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor*—whenever it occurred—which is admitted or established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon is to be permanently removed from ministry and, if warranted, dismissed from the clerical state. In keeping with the stated purpose of this *Charter*, an offending priest or deacon is to be offered therapeutic professional assistance both for the purpose of prevention and also for his own healing and well-being.

The diocesan/eparchial bishop is to exercise his power of governance, within the parameters of the universal law of the Church, to ensure that any priest or deacon subject to his governance who has committed even one act of sexual abuse of a minor as described below (see note) shall not continue in ministry.

A priest or deacon who is accused of sexual abuse of a minor is to be accorded the presumption of innocence during the investigation of the allegation and all appropriate steps are to be taken to protect his reputation. He is to be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. If the allegation is deemed not substantiated, every step possible is to be taken to restore his good name, should it have been harmed.

In fulfilling this article, dioceses/eparchies are to follow the requirements of the universal law of the Church and of the *Essential Norms* approved for the United States.

ARTICLE 6. There are to be clear and well publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and employees and volunteers of the Church in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people.

ARTICLE 7. Dioceses/eparchies are to be open and transparent in communicating with

the public about sexual abuse of minors by clergy within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved. This is especially so with regard to informing parish and other church communities directly affected by the sexual abuse of a minor.

To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures

ARTICLE 8. By the authority of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse is renewed, and it is now constituted the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People. It becomes a standing committee of the Conference. Its membership is to include representation from all the episcopal regions of the country, with new appointments staggered to maintain continuity in the effort to protect children and youth.

The Committee is to advise the USCCB on all matters related to child and youth protection and is to oversee the development of the plans, programs, and budget of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection. It is to provide the USCCB with comprehensive planning and recommendations concerning child and youth protection by coordinating the efforts of the Secretariat and the National Review Board.

ARTICLE 9. The Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, established by the Conference of Catholic Bishops, is to staff the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People and be a resource for dioceses/eparchies for the implementation of “safe environment” programs and for suggested training and development of diocesan personnel responsible for child and youth protection programs, taking into account the financial and other resources, as well as the population, area, and demographics of the diocese/eparchy.

The Secretariat is to produce an annual public report on the progress made in implementing and maintaining the standards in this *Charter*. The report is to be based on an annual audit process whose method, scope, and cost are to be approved by the Administrative Committee on the recommendation of the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People. This public report is to include the names of those dioceses/eparchies which the audit shows are not in compliance with the provisions and expectations of the *Charter*. As a member of the Conference staff, the Executive Director of the Secretariat is appointed by and reports to the General Secretary. The Executive Director is to provide the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People and the National Review Board with regular reports of the Secretariat’s activities.

ARTICLE 10. The whole Church, especially the laity, at both the diocesan and national levels, needs to be engaged in maintaining safe environments in the Church for children and young people.

The Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People is to be assisted by the National Review Board, a consultative body established in 2002 by the USCCB. The Board will review the annual report of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection on the implementation of this *Charter* in each diocese/eparchy and any recommendations that emerge from it, and offer its own assessment regarding its approval and publication to the Conference President.

The Board will also advise the Conference President on future members. The Board members are appointed by the Conference President in consultation with the Administrative Committee and are accountable to him and to the USCCB Executive Committee. Before a candidate is contacted, the Conference President is to seek and obtain, in writing, the endorsement of the candidate's diocesan bishop. The Board is to operate in accord with the statutes and bylaws of the USCCB and within procedural guidelines developed by the Board in consultation with the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People and approved by the USCCB Administrative Committee. These guidelines set forth such matters as the Board's purpose and responsibility, officers, terms of office, and frequency of reports to the Conference President on its activities.

The Board will offer its advice as it collaborates with the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People on matters of child and youth protection, specifically on policies and best practices. The Board and Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People will meet jointly several times a year.

The Board will review the work of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and make recommendations to the Director. It will assist the Director in the development of resources for dioceses.

The Board will offer its assessment of the *Causes and Context* study to the Conference, along with any recommendations suggested by the study.

ARTICLE 11. The President of the Conference is to inform the Holy See of this revised *Charter* to indicate the manner in which we, the Catholic bishops, together with the entire Church in the United States, intend to continue our commitment to the protection of children and young people. The President is also to share with the Holy See the annual reports on the implementation of the *Charter*.

To Protect the Faithful in the Future

ARTICLE 12. Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain "safe environment" programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, •Employees and volunteers, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children.

ARTICLE 13. Dioceses/eparchies are to evaluate the background of all incardinated and non-incardinated priests and deacons who are engaged in ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese/eparchy and of all diocesan/eparchial and parish/school or other paid personnel and •Employees and volunteers whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies.

In addition, they are to employ adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination (cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation* [Fifth Edition], 2006, no. 39).

ARTICLE 14. Transfers of clergy who have committed an act of sexual abuse against a minor for residence, including retirement, shall be as in accord with Norm 12 of the Essential Norms. (Cf. *Proposed Guidelines on the Transfer or Assignment of Clergy and Religious*, adopted by the USCCB, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), and the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) in 1993.)

ARTICLE 15. To ensure continuing collaboration and mutuality of effort in the protection of children and young people on the part of the bishops and religious ordinaries, two representatives of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men are to serve as consultants to the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People. At the invitation of the Major Superiors, the Committee will designate two of its members to consult with its counterpart at CMSM. Diocesan/eparchial bishops and major superiors of clerical institutes or their delegates are to meet periodically to coordinate their roles concerning the issue of allegations made against a cleric member of a religious institute ministering in a diocese/eparchy.

ARTICLE 16. Given the extent of the problem of the sexual abuse of minors in our society, we are willing to cooperate with other churches and ecclesial communities, other religious bodies, institutions of learning, and other interested organizations in conducting research in this area.

ARTICLE 17. We commit ourselves to work individually in our dioceses/eparchies and together as a Conference, through the appropriate committees, to strengthen our programs both for initial priestly formation and for the ongoing formation of priests. With renewed urgency, we will promote programs of human formation for chastity and celibacy for both seminarians and priests based upon the criteria found in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the *Program of Priestly Formation*, the *Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*, and the results of the Apostolic Visitation. We will continue to assist priests, deacons, and seminarians in living out their vocation in faithful and integral ways.

Conclusion

As we wrote in 2002, “It is within this context of the essential soundness of the priesthood and of the deep faith of our brothers and sisters in the Church that we know that we can meet and resolve this crisis for now and the future.”

We wish to reaffirm once again that the vast majority of priests and deacons serve their people faithfully and that they have the esteem and affection of their people. They also have our love and esteem and our commitment to their good names and well-being. An essential means of dealing with the crisis is prayer for healing and reconciliation, and acts of reparation for the grave offense to God and the deep wound inflicted upon his holy people.

Closely connected to prayer and acts of reparation is the call to holiness of life and the care of the diocesan/eparchial bishop to ensure that he and his priests avail themselves of the proven ways of avoiding sin and growing in holiness of life.

It is with reliance on prayer and penance that we renew the pledges which we made in the original *Charter*:

We pledge most solemnly to one another and to you, God’s people, that we will work to our utmost for the protection of children and youth.

We pledge that we will devote to this goal the resources and personnel necessary to accomplish it.

We pledge that we will do our best to ordain to the priesthood and put into positions of trust only those who share this commitment to protecting children and youth.

We pledge that we will work toward healing and reconciliation for those sexually abused by clerics.

Much has been done to honor these pledges. We devoutly pray that God who has begun this good work in us will bring it to fulfillment.

This *Charter* is published for the dioceses/eparchies of the United States. It is to be reviewed again after two years by the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People with the advice of the National Review Board. The results of this review are to be presented to the full Conference of Bishops for confirmation.

NOTE

1. For purposes of this *Charter*, the offense of sexual abuse of a minor will be understood in accord with the provisions of *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (SST), article 6, which reads:

§1. The more grave delicts against morals which are reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are:

1^o the delict against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed by a cleric with a minor below the age of eighteen years; in this case, a person who habitually lacks the use of reason is to be considered equivalent to a minor.

2^o the acquisition, possession, or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of fourteen, for purposes of sexual gratification, by whatever means or using whatever technology;

§2. A cleric who commits the delicts mentioned above in §1 is to be punished according to the gravity of his crime, not excluding dismissal or deposition.

In view of the Circular Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, dated May 3, 2011, which calls for “mak[ing] allowance for the legislation of the country where the

Conference is located,” Section III(g), we will apply the federal legal age for defining child pornography, which includes pornographic images of minors under the age of eighteen, for assessing a cleric’s suitability for ministry and for complying with civil reporting statutes.

If there is any doubt whether a specific act qualifies as an external, objectively grave violation, the writings of recognized moral theologians should be consulted, and the opinions of recognized experts should be appropriately obtained (*Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State*, 1995, p. 6). Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop/eparch, with the advice of a qualified review board, to determine the gravity of the alleged act.

2. In 2009, after consultation with members of the USCCB Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and approval from the USCCB Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, additional Model Letters of Suitability, now available on the USCCB website, were agreed upon and published for use by bishops and major superiors in situations which involve both temporary and extended ministry for clerics

**Essential Norms for Diocesan/ Eparchial Policies Dealing with
Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons**

Office of the President

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Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, DD Bishop of Spokane

May 5, 2006

**THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
DECREE OF PROMULGATION**

On November 13, 2002, the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved as particular law the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*. Following the grant of the required *recognitio* by the Congregation for Bishops on December 8, 2002, the *Essential Norms* were promulgated by the President of the same Conference on December 12, 2002.

Thereafter, on June 17, 2005, the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a revised text of the *Essential Norms*. By a decree dated January 1, 2006, and signed by His Eminence, Giovanni Battista Cardinal Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and His Excellency, the Most Reverend Francesco Monterisi, Secretary of the same Congregation, the *recognitio* originally granted to the *Essential Norms* of 2002 was extended to the revised version *donec aliter provideatur*.

As President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I therefore decree the promulgation of the *Essential Norms* of June 17, 2005. These *Norms* shall obtain force on May 15, 2006, and so shall from that day bind as particular law all Dioceses and Eparchies of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad Bishop of Spokane
President, USCCB

Reverend Monsignor David J. Malloy General Secretary

Preamble

On June 14, 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The charter addresses the Church's commitment to deal appropriately and effectively with cases of sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons, and other church personnel (i.e., employees and •Employees and volunteers). The bishops of the United States have promised to reach out to those who have been sexually abused as minors by anyone serving the Church in ministry, employment, or a volunteer position, whether the sexual abuse was recent or occurred many years ago. They stated that they would be as open as possible with the people in parishes and communities about instances of sexual abuse of minors, with respect always for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved.

They have committed themselves to the pastoral and spiritual care and emotional well-being of those who have been sexually abused and of their families.

In addition, the bishops will work with parents, civil authorities, educators, and various organizations in the community to make and maintain the safest environment for minors. In the same way, the bishops have pledged to evaluate the background of seminary applicants as well as all church personnel who have responsibility for the care and supervision of children and young people.

Therefore, to ensure that each diocese/eparchy in the United States of America will have procedures in place to respond promptly to all allegations of sexual abuse of minors, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops decrees these norms for diocesan/eparchial policies dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors by diocesan and religious priests or deacons.¹ These norms are complementary to the universal law of the Church and are to be interpreted in accordance with that law. The Church has traditionally considered the sexual abuse of minors a grave delict and punishes the offender with penalties, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state if the case so warrants.

For purposes of these Norms, sexual abuse shall include any offense by a cleric against the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue with a minor as understood in CIC, canon 1395 §2, and CCEO, canon 1453 §1 (*Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, article 6 §1).²

Norms

1. These Essential Norms have been granted recognition by the Holy See. Having been legitimately promulgated in accordance with the practice of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on May 5, 2006, they constitute particular law for all the dioceses/eparchies of the United States of America.³
2. Each diocese/eparchy will have a written policy on the sexual abuse of minors by priests and deacons, as well as by other church personnel. This policy is to comply fully with, and is to specify in more detail, the steps to be taken in implementing the requirements of canon law, particularly CIC, canons 1717-1719, and CCEO, canons 1468-1470. A copy of this policy will be filed with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops within three months of the effective date of these norms. Copies of any eventual revisions of the written diocesan/eparchial policy are also to be filed with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops within three months of such modifications.
3. Each diocese/eparchy will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by priests or deacons.
4. To assist diocesan/eparchial bishops, each diocese/eparchy will also have a review board which will function as a confidential consultative body to the bishop/eparch in discharging his responsibilities. The functions of this board may include

- a. advising the diocesan bishop/eparch in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry;
 - b. reviewing diocesan/eparchial policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors; and
 - c. offering advice on all aspects of these cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively.
5. The review board, established by the diocesan/eparchial bishop, will be composed of at least five persons of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. The majority of the review board members will be lay persons who are not in the employ of the diocese/eparchy; but at least one member should be a priest who is an experienced and respected pastor of the diocese/eparchy in question, and at least one member should have particular expertise in the treatment of the sexual abuse of minors. The members will be appointed for a term of five years, which can be renewed. It is desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the review board.
6. When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation in accordance with canon law will be initiated and conducted promptly and objectively (CIC, c. 1717; CCEO, c. 1468). During the investigation the accused enjoys the presumption of innocence, and all appropriate steps shall be taken to protect his reputation. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel and will be promptly notified of the results of the investigation. When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith shall be notified. The bishop/eparch shall then apply the precautionary measures mentioned in CIC, canon 1722, or CCEO, canon 1473—i.e., withdraw the accused from exercising the sacred ministry or any ecclesiastical office or function, impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the process.⁴
7. The alleged offender may be requested to seek, and may be urged voluntarily to comply with, an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation at a facility mutually acceptable to the diocese/eparchy and to the accused.
8. When even a single act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants (SST, Art. 6; CIC, c. 1395 §2; CCEO, c. 1453 §1).⁵
 - a. In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law must be observed, and the various provisions of canon law must be considered (cf. *Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State*, 1995; Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001). Unless the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, calls the case to itself because of special circumstances, it

will direct the diocesan bishop/eparch to proceed (Article 13, “Procedural Norms” for *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, AAS, 93, 2001, p. 787). If the case would otherwise be barred by prescription, because sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the bishop/eparch may apply to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a derogation from the prescription, while indicating relevant grave reasons. For the sake of canonical due process, the accused is to be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the diocese/eparchy will supply canonical counsel to a priest. The provisions of CIC, canon 1722, or CCEO, canon 1473, shall be implemented during the pendency of the penal process.

- b. If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (e.g., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the offender ought to lead a life of prayer and penance. He will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. He is to be instructed not to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a priest.
9. At all times, the diocesan bishop/eparch has the executive power of governance, within the parameters of the universal law of the Church, through an administrative act, to remove an offending cleric from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit his exercise of priestly ministry.⁶ Because sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric is a crime in the universal law of the Church (CIC, c. 1395 §2; CCEO, c. 1453 §1) and is a crime in all civil jurisdictions in the United States, for the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of canon law, the diocesan bishop/eparch shall exercise this power of governance to ensure that any priest or deacon who has committed even one act of sexual abuse of a minor as described above shall not continue in active ministry.⁷
10. The priest or deacon may at any time request a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In exceptional cases, the bishop/eparch may request of the Holy Father the dismissal of the priest or deacon from the clerical state *ex officio*, even without the consent of the priest or deacon.
11. The diocese/eparchy will comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities and will cooperate in their investigation. In every instance, the diocese/eparchy will advise and support a person’s right to make a report to public authorities.⁸
12. No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor may be transferred for a ministerial assignment in another diocese/eparchy. Every bishop/eparch who receives a priest or deacon from outside his jurisdiction will obtain the necessary information regarding any past act of sexual abuse of a minor by the priest or deacon in question. Before such a diocesan/eparchial priest or deacon can be transferred for residence to another diocese/eparchy, his diocesan/eparchial bishop shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the bishop of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a

danger to children or young people.

In the case of the assignment for residence of such a clerical member of an institute or a society into a local community within a diocese/eparchy, the major superior shall inform the diocesan/eparchial bishop and share with him in a manner respecting the limitations of confidentiality found in canon and civil law all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people so that the bishop/eparch can make an informed judgment that suitable safeguards are in place for the protection of children and young people. This will be done with due recognition of the legitimate authority of the bishop/eparch; of the provisions of CIC, canon 678 (CCEO, canons 415 §1 and 554 §2), and of CIC, canon 679; and of the autonomy of the religious life (CIC, c. 586).

13. Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and of the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has been shown to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken to restore the good name of the person falsely accused.

NOTES

1. These Norms constitute particular law for the dioceses, eparchies, clerical religious institutes, and societies of apostolic life of the United States with respect to all priests and deacons in the ecclesiastical ministry of the Church in the United States. When a major superior of a clerical religious institute or society of apostolic life applies and interprets them for the internal life and governance of the institute or society, he has the obligation to do so according to the universal law of the Church and the proper law of the institute or society.

2. If there is any doubt whether a specific act qualifies as an external, objectively grave violation, the writings of recognized moral theologians should be consulted, and the opinions of recognized experts should be appropriately obtained (Canonical Delicts, p. 6). Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop/eparch, with the advice of a qualified review board, to determine the gravity of the alleged act.

3. Due regard must be given to the proper legislative authority of each Eastern Catholic Church.

4. Article 19 *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* states, “With due regard for the right of the Ordinary to impose from the outset of the preliminary investigation those measures which are established in can. 1722 of the Code of Canon Law, or in can. 1473 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the respective presiding

§§1-3, 193 §2, 191, and 1389-1396.

5. Removal from ministry is required whether or not the cleric is diagnosed by qualified experts as a pedophile or as suffering from a related sexual disorder that requires professional

treatment. With regard to the use of the phrase “ecclesiastical ministry,” by clerical members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, the provisions of canons 678 and 738 also apply, with due regard for canons 586 and 732.

6 Cf. CIC, cc. 35-58, 149, 157, 187-189, 192-195, 277 §3, 381 §1, 383, 391, 1348, and 1740-1747. Cf. also CCEO, cc. 1510 §1 and 2, 1°-2°, 1511, 1512 §§1-2, 1513 §§2-3 and 5, 1514-1516, 1517 §1, 1518, 1519 §2, 1520 §§1-3, 1521, 1522 §1, 1523-1526, 940, 946, 967-971, 974-977, 374, 178, 192 the accused freely resign from any currently held ecclesiastical office (CIC, cc. 187-189; CCEO, cc. 967-971).

7 The diocesan bishop/eparch may exercise his executive power of governance to take one or more of the following administrative actions (CIC, cc. 381, 129ff.; CCEO, cc. 178, 979ff.):

a. He may request that the accused freely resign from any currently held ecclesiastical office (CIC, cc. 187-189; CCEO, cc. 967-971)

b. Should the accused decline to resign and should the diocesan bishop/eparch judge the accused to be truly not suitable (CIC, c. 149 §1; CCEO, c. 940) at this time for holding an office previously freely conferred (CIC, c. 157), then he may remove that person from office observing the required canonical procedures (CIC, cc. 192-195, 1740-1747; CCEO, cc. 974-977, 1389-1396).

c. For a cleric who holds no office in the diocese/eparchy, any previously delegated faculties may be administratively removed (CIC, cc. 391 §1 and 142 §1; CCEO, cc. 191 §1 and 992 §1), while any *de iure* faculties may be removed or restricted by the competent authority as provided in law (e.g., CIC, c. 764; CCEO, c. 610 §§2-3).

d. The diocesan bishop/eparch may also determine that circumstances surrounding a particular case constitute the just and reasonable cause for a priest to celebrate the Eucharist with no member of the faithful present (CIC, c. 906). The bishop may forbid the priest to celebrate the Eucharist publicly and to administer the sacraments, for the good of the Church and for his own good.

e. Depending on the gravity of the case, the diocesan bishop/eparch may also dispense (CIC, cc. 85-88; CCEO, cc. 1536 §1–1538) the cleric from the obligation 28 of wearing clerical attire (CIC, c. 284; CCEO, c. 387) and may urge that he not do so, for the good of the Church and for his own good.

These administrative actions shall be taken in writing and by means of decrees (CIC, cc. 47-58; CCEO, cc. 1510 §2, 1°-2°, 1511, 1513 §§2-3 and 5, 1514, 1517 §1, 1518, 1519 §2, 1520) so that the cleric affected is afforded the opportunity of recourse against them in accord with canon law (CIC, cc. 1734ff.; CCEO, cc. 999ff.).

8 The necessary observance of the canonical norms internal to the Church is not intended in any way to hinder the course of any civil action that may be operative. At the same time, the Church reaffirms her right to enact legislation binding on all her members concerning the ecclesiastical dimensions of the delict of sexual abuse of minors.

A Statement of Episcopal Commitment

We bishops pledge again to respond to the demands of the *Charter* in a way that manifests our accountability to God, to God's people, and to one another. Individually and together, we acknowledge mistakes in the past when some bishops transferred, from one assignment to another, priests who abused minors. We recognize our roles in the suffering this has caused, and we continue to ask forgiveness for it.

Without at all diminishing the importance of broader accountability, this statement focuses on the accountability which flows from our episcopal communion and fraternal solidarity, a moral responsibility we have with and for each other.

While bishops are ordained primarily for their diocese or eparchy, we are called as well to protect the unity and to promote the common discipline of the whole Church (CIC, c. 392; CCEO, c. 201). Participating in the college of bishops, each bishop is responsible to act in a manner that reflects both effective and affective collegiality.

Respecting the legitimate rights of bishops who are directly accountable to the Holy See, in a spirit of collegiality and fraternity we renew our commitment to the following:

1. Within each province, we will assist each other to interpret correctly and implement the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, always respecting Church law and striving to reflect the Gospel.
2. We will apply the requirements of the *Charter* also to ourselves, respecting always Church law as it applies to bishops. Therefore, if a bishop is accused of the sexual abuse of a minor, the accused bishop is obliged to inform the Apostolic Nuncio. If another bishop becomes aware of the sexual abuse of a minor by another bishop or of an allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor by a bishop, he too is obliged to inform the Apostolic Nuncio and comply with applicable civil laws.
3. In cases of financial demands for settlements involving allegations of any sexual misconduct by a bishop, he, or any of us who become aware of it, is obliged to inform the Apostolic Nuncio.
4. Within each of our provinces, as an expression of collegiality, including fraternal support, fraternal challenge and fraternal correction, we will engage in ongoing mutual reflection upon our commitment to holiness of life and upon the exercise of our episcopal ministry.

In making this statement, we firmly uphold the dignity of every human being and renew our commitment to live and promote the chastity required of all followers of Christ and especially of deacons, priests and bishops.

This Statement of Episcopal Commitment will be reviewed by the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations upon the next review of the *Charter*.

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BEST PRACTICES FOR SCREENING ADULT EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1. Develop Policies and Procedures

Comprehensive policies help ensure that potential employees and volunteers are treated fairly and that procedures are used consistently. Policies also help to provide continuity to a program.

Parish policies might include information about how employees and volunteers will be screened – whether by application, interview, or a combination – what kind and the minimum number of references that will be required. Additionally, evaluation, dismissal, separation, and grievance processes could be outlined.

2. Create Volunteer Position Descriptions

Detailed position descriptions allow potential employees and volunteers to determine whether an opportunity fits their interests, skills, and schedule. Additionally, volunteer administrators may use the position description to screen candidates based upon the basic qualifications needed for placement, including a clean police record.

3. Ask Employees and Volunteers to Complete an Application

A thorough written application can be a valuable screening tool. An application can help determine a volunteer's attitudes toward minors, child abuse, and volunteering in general. An application may ask for personal information including name, address, phone, e-mail, social security number; emergency contact information; recent employment/volunteer information; areas of interest and availability; driver's license/insurance information when appropriate; medical conditions or special needs; references; and past felonies and/or misdemeanors. Ask potential employees and volunteers for their signature to affirm that they have given truthful information.

4. Conduct Interviews

Conducting interviews can be especially helpful when placing individuals interested in volunteer positions. Effective interviewing techniques include open-ended questions, good listening skills, and a clear understanding of the questions interviewers are permitted to ask under existing federal and state regulations.

5. Ask for References and/or Endorsements

References help organizations confirm personal and professional information provided by the potential volunteer and offer an objective opinion of that person's qualifications. For activities that call for regular unsupervised access, organizations might require employees and volunteers to give at least two non-related references. For decentralized activities, seeking

endorsement/approval from a person who is well acquainted with the volunteer will provide additional information. It's important to document all contacts.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MONITORING PARISH AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

Child molesters look for ways to spend time alone with minors. If they know someone is watching, they have more trouble finding opportunities to abuse without getting caught. The following steps can help create a safer environment for our minors and adults.

- Identify secluded areas, lock empty rooms.
- Develop policies regarding use of secluded areas.
- Do not permit minors to enter staff-only areas.
- Only meet with minors where other adults can pass by.
- Supervisors should look in on activities.
- Make sure enough adult employees and volunteers are present for all programs.
- Encourage parents to visit and participate in programs and activities.
- Do not start any new programs without approval from the pastor.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SCREENING AND MONITORING MINOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Introduction

In many parishes, minors provide a substantial amount of service in programs for younger minors. Service projects that provide babysitting for parents during the holidays or assistance with religious education classes or nurseries during Mass are just a few of the ways that adolescents serve parishes and learn about the responsibility of parish life. Often these projects are part of preparation for Confirmation.

However, it is important not to assume automatically that minors are “safe” just because of their participation in ministry. Research indicates that adolescents are a high-risk group for sexual abuse of children. In fact, studies in the United States indicate that juveniles are responsible for 40 percent of the sexual assaults on children under the age of 6 and 39 percent of the attacks on children ages 11-16.[i] One study in the U.S. shows that 13- to 14-year-olds are responsible for more than three times the number of sexual molestation cases of children under the age 12 than any other age group over 16.[ii]

Over the past several years, through *Protecting God’s Children for Adults* sessions and diocesan policies and audits, there is a heightened awareness about the need to screen adults before allowing them access to minors. The need to screen and monitor those with access to children is not just confined to adults. Attention must be paid to the minors who are caring for and ministering to minors.

Screening

Many parishes are looking for guidance in their efforts to conduct thorough screening and meet the needs of ministry to all the minors in the community. There is no easy way to screen minors. In fact, some traditional screening tools will not help when the applicant is a minor. We cannot conduct civilian criminal background checks on minors, for example. Even those with convictions are often protected from discovery through background checks and the record is wiped clean when the person turns 18.

This means that it is essential that policies be established and enforced that govern the interactions between minors and the people they serve. Traditional screening tools including applications, references (perhaps including letters of references from non-related adults who are familiar with the minor’s character), and personal interviews are crucial parts to any effective screening process.

Parish policies and procedures must also take into account the limited ability to screen minor applicants. For example, require that a policy-compliant adult supervise all interactions, programs, and events involving minors and younger children. In addition, maintain a policy similar to the Boy Scouts’ “two-deep leadership.” Within a parish, this means that there be no

less than two responsible adult leaders present with minors, and both of them must be compliant with all diocesan policies.

Establishing policies and going through the traditional application and interview processes can help parishes to establish a responsible process for screening minors who are involved in children's ministries.

Training

Because of the sensitive nature of the material, minors are not permitted to attend *Protecting God's Children for Adults* sessions. Parish leaders should work with minor employees and volunteers to make them aware of parish and diocesan policies.

The *Protecting God's Children Plan to Protect and Reporting Abuse* handouts should be shared with minor employees and volunteer to make them aware of our plan to protect all minors. When sharing information about child sexual abuse with minor employees and volunteers, particular attention to the following will also be beneficial:

- The harm sexual abuse causes.
- The danger of dwelling on unhealthy fantasies.
- The importance of reporting suspected abuse, including abuse committed by a peer.

Warning Signs

Some of the behavioral warning signs of risky minor are the same as those of risky adults. Additionally, the following signs are unique to the minor offender.

Risky adolescents may:

- Explore his or her own natural sexual curiosity with younger children or those of differing size, status, ability, or power. This means a minor may be more overtly sexual with young children.
- Focus on being with younger children rather than with their own peers. This minor spends an unusual amount of time with younger children when he or she could be with peers.
- Share "secret" places or hideaways with younger children or create and play "special" games with them that involve too much touching and demands for silence.
- Insist on physical contact with a child, even when the child resists the attention.

[i] Oliver, B. (2007) Child Abuse & Neglect, "Three steps to reducing child molestation by adolescents", Vol 31, 683.

[ii] Ibid.

Based on *Screening and Monitoring Adolescent Volunteers* , by: Sharon Doty, J.D., M.H.R. and published by The National Catholic Risk Retention Group, 2008.

BACKGROUND REPORT INFORMATION

August 2025

The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) has provided updated guidance on the processing of criminal background reports. This guidance applies to both state-level (BCI) and multi-state (FBI) reports.

Fingerprinting Locations:

Fingerprinting can be done at any location offering WebCheck services. The following link provides a list of locations throughout Ohio, searchable by county:

<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Business/Services-for-Business/WebCheck/Webcheck-Community-Listing>

Codes for Fingerprinting:

All employees and volunteers must use the appropriate code listed below, including parish and school volunteers. Do not use the National Child Protection Act/Volunteers for Children Act (NCPA/VCA) as the reason for fingerprinting, as this may result in processing delays or rejection.

The Diocese of Columbus, after consulting with the BCI's Quality Assurance Unit, does not participate in the Volunteer and Employee Criminal History System (VECHS). Instead, using ORC 2151.86 ensures a more comprehensive criminal background report on all volunteers.

Reasons for Fingerprinting:

School employees:

- Licensed school employees (teachers, Pupil Activity Permit (PAP) holders, counselors, some therapists): ORC 3319.291
- Non-teaching employees (maintenance, administrative support, etc.): ORC 3319.39B1

Clergy and parish employees:

- If you have lived in Ohio for more than 5 consecutive years, only the state-level (BCI) report is required.
- If you have lived in Ohio less than 5 consecutive years, both FBI and BCI reports are required. Use code ORC 2151.86 for both.

Parish and/or school volunteers:

- If you have lived in Ohio for more than 5 consecutive years, only the state-level (BCI) report is required.
- If you have lived in Ohio less than 5 consecutive years, both FBI and BCI reports are required. Use code ORC 2151.86 for both.

Submission and Renewal:

All background reports must be sent directly to:
Safe Environment Office
Diocese of Columbus
197 E. Gay St.
Columbus, OH 43215

The Diocese does not accept criminal background reports submitted by individuals or third parties (including employers, schools, or other organizations). This policy ensures:

- Reports are unaltered and authentic.
- Background checks were conducted under the correct codes for employment or volunteering.
- Reports are current, with no gaps since the report date.

Renewal Requirement:

All employees and volunteers are required to renew their criminal background check every five (5) years to remain compliant with Diocesan Safe Environment policies.

Obtaining Copies of Background Reports*BCI reports:*

If your BCI report is less than 11 months old, you may request the BCI to send a copy directly to the Safe Environment Office using the BCI WebCheck Letter Verifier service. This request costs \$8 and must be mailed directly to BCI (address on the form).

FBI reports:

The FBI does not provide copies of background reports to individuals. Reports are sent only to the designated organization or person at the time of fingerprinting. Sharing FBI reports with third parties is strictly prohibited under federal law (Title 28 USC §534 and Public Law 92-544).

Background Check Information for New Registrants

All new employees and volunteers must complete the fingerprint-based criminal background check using the appropriate code before beginning employment or volunteer service.

The background check must be on file with the Safe Environment Office prior to the start of work or volunteering activities.

Failure to complete the background check and comply with these requirements will delay or prevent participation.

Protecting God's Children™
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: "Who has to take Protecting God's Children™ (PGC)?"

- All paid diocesan, parish and school staff and any clergy temporarily assigned to the Diocese of Columbus *regardless of their level of contact with children and youth*
- All volunteers in a program or ministry for children and youth *regardless of their level of contact with children and youth* (examples: Catholic school, PSR program, etc.)
- Employees and volunteers for other parish programs or ministries who have been delegated care, custody, or control of children and youth (example: choir director, sacristan)

Q: "Is there a cost to take the PGC class?"

There is no charge to attend. All workbook materials and handouts are provided by the host parish or school. Participants should bring a pen.

Q: "I took the Boy Scouts of America program; do I still have to take PGC?"

Yes.

Q: "Can I get CEU credit for my job?"

The Diocese is not equipped to provide continuing education credits for this class.

Q: "I'm not Catholic. Do I still have to take Protecting God's Children™ to coach?"

Yes.

Q: "Do I have to take the class just to be a driver for a high school field trip?"

Yes. Duration of service does not mitigate compliance.

Q: "I am a victim of sexual abuse and I would find it too disturbing to attend the class. Can I still volunteer?"

The Diocese will work individually with victims. Call the diocesan Safe Environment Consultant at 614-241-2565 for confidential arrangements.

Q: "How do I register for the Protecting God's Children™ class?"

You may register on-line at www.virtus.org and click on "Registration." Choose "Begin the Registration Process", select "Diocese of Columbus" as your location, and then follow the prompts. If you do not have Internet access, you may contact your parish or school for help or the diocesan Safe Environment Office.

Q: "How do I find out when and where the classes are being held?"

The current schedule is posted online at www.virtus.org, click on "Registration" and choose "View a list of sessions." Be sure to select "Diocese of Columbus."

Q: “Is childcare available at the class?”

No, and children are not permitted to attend. Participants who bring children will be asked to leave and reschedule for another session.

Q: “Where can I get more information?”

Visit the diocesan Safe Environment Office website at <http://www.columbuscatholic.org> and click on “*Protecting God’s Children™*” or contact the Diocese at 614-241-2568.

Protecting God's Children™ Training Registration Instructions

All participants must be registered in the **VIRTUS® system** to be considered **compliant** with the **Safe Environment Program** of the Diocese of Columbus.

For Returning Users (Already Attended a Session):

Follow these steps if you previously completed a *Protecting God's Children™* session but are not yet in the diocesan database or are updating your record:

1. Visit www.virtus.org
2. On the left side of the screen, click the yellow “Registration” link below the login area.
3. Select “Begin the Registration Process.”
4. Choose “Columbus, OH (Diocese)” as your organization and click Select.
5. Create a User ID and Password (the system will notify you if your User ID is already in use).
6. Enter your personal information (name, address, phone, email) and click Continue.
7. Select the primary location where you currently volunteer, work, or worship.

Do not select your training site here.

8. Confirm your list of locations. If you serve at more than one parish or school, choose YES to add others.
9. Select all applicable roles (e.g., Catechist, Coach, Parent Volunteer) and enter a descriptive title.
10. Continue to the second roles page, make additional selections if needed, then click Continue.
11. Answer the three YES/NO questions and click Continue.
12. When asked, “*Have you already attended a Protecting God's Children™ session?*” — select YES.
13. Choose the location and date where you previously attended from the dropdown list.
14. Click Complete Registration. You will see the message:

“Your account request will be reviewed by your coordinator.”

After completing registration, email the Safe Environment Office with your name, date, and location of the session to ensure your record is reviewed and approved:

- **Meredith Gaul** – Safe Environment Coordinator
614-241-2568, Option 3
✉ mgaul@columbuscatholic.org
 - **Megan Matthews** – Safe Environment Coordinator
614-241-2568, Option 1
✉ mmatthews@columbuscatholic.org
-

For First-Time Registrants:

If you have never attended a *Protecting God's Children*™ session, follow these steps to register:

1. Visit <https://columbuscatholic.org/safe>
 2. Click the green “VIRTUS Registration” button at the top of the page.
 3. You will be redirected to a list of all available *Protecting God's Children*™ sessions.
 4. At the top of that page, click the gray “Start Registration” button.
 5. Follow the prompts to:
 - Choose the Diocese of Columbus
 - Create a User ID and Password
 - Enter your contact and role information
 6. Review the list of available sessions carefully:
 - Read the session notes! Some sessions are:
 - Restricted to a specific parish/school's employees or volunteers
 - Offered in Spanish instead of English
 7. Once you select and register for a session, follow any additional prompts to complete your profile and training requirements.
-

Important Reminders:

- It is not encouraged to attend a session without registering through VIRTUS.
- All adults who work with minors in the Diocese of Columbus must complete the *Protecting God's Children*™ training before beginning service.

APPENDIX & FORMS

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
COMPLAINT FORM FOR ALLEGATIONS
OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR

This form may be used to present allegations that a Priest, Deacon or Church employee, agent or volunteer has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor. The completed Form is CONFIDENTIAL and is to be submitted to: Victims Assistance Coordinator, Diocese of Columbus, 198 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, in a sealed envelope clearly marked CONFIDENTIAL This form may also be sent to the secure inbox of the Victims Assistance Coordinator at: helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org.

IV. INFORMATION AS TO MINOR

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name and Address of Parent(s) or Guardian: _____

Telephone No: _____

Parish: _____

Name of school attending: _____

V. INFORMATION AS TO THE ACCUSED

Name: _____

Position: _____Clergy _____Deacon _____Employee _____Volunteer

Name and Address of place of employment: _____

Has accused been confronted or informed of allegation? _____Yes _____No

If yes, when and by whom: _____

VI. INFORMATION AS TO ALLEGATIONS

Brief description of alleged abuse (time, place and acts): _____

Have the allegations been reported to any civil authorities or Church personnel? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, when, how and to whom: _____

Date of Report

Signature of Person Reporting

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
PARISH/ SCHOOL VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Please print clearly.

Name of Parish/ School (City) _____

Program(s) and/or Position(s) Applicant will be volunteering for _____

Where will the activities be held? _____

Dear Volunteer:

Thank you for offering your time and talents to work with the children and youth of our parish. Volunteers such as you are indispensable to our programs. Because you will be working with our young people, we require some basic information about you. This assures the best possible programs for our young people. Please fill in the information requested below, and return this form to the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education, Youth Minister, or the parish office.

Name of Applicant _____ Male ☐
Female ☐

Social Security Number _____ - _____ - _____ Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone(s) _____

E-Mail _____

Current Employment (position and location) _____

Availability:

Sunday ☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐

Mornings ☐ Afternoons ☐ Evenings ☐

Weekly ☐ Twice Monthly ☐ Other ☐ _____

Have you ever had a criminal records check? No ☐ Yes ☐

If yes, please list the year a background check was last performed, and the result _____

If no, do you authorize fingerprint impressions and a criminal records check if requested? No ☐ Yes ☐

NOTE: AT ANY TIME YOU MIGHT BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A SET OF FINGERPRINT IMPRESSIONS AND A CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK MIGHT BE CONDUCTED WITH RESPECT TO YOU. (ORC §109.575)

Do you have a history of?

Alcohol or drug abuse No ☐ Yes ☐

Mental Illness No ☐ Yes ☐

Legal Problems

1) Have you ever been arrested? No ☐ Yes ☐

2) Have you been convicted of child neglect or abuse of any kind, or a felony? No ☐ Yes ☐

3) Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked? No ☐ Yes ☐

4) Have you ever been on probation? No ☐ Yes ☐

Please explain any 'Yes' answers _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Emergency Contact Person _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____

Chronic Conditions (e.g. Allergies, Epilepsy; Diabetes) _____

Medications _____

Medical Insurance _____ Policy Number _____

Address _____ Phone (_____) _____

Member's Name _____ Phone (_____) _____

Family Doctor _____ Phone (_____) _____

PREVIOUS VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES

Location	Position	Length of Service
Location	Position	Length of Service
Location	Position	Length of Service
Location	Position	Length of Service
Location	Position	Length of Service

REFERENCES

(Give full names and telephone numbers.)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteers work collaboratively with the pastor and/or other supervisors and associates in ministry.
- Volunteers faithfully represent and practice the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
- Volunteers are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities.
- Volunteers respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their own personal form of spirituality normative.
- Volunteers recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful of anyone or any group.
- Volunteers serve all people without regard to gender, creed, national origin, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political beliefs.
- Volunteers act to ensure all persons have access to the resources, services and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.
- Volunteers are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative.
- Volunteers are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministry conscientiously, zealously, and diligently.

- Volunteers exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- Volunteers respect confidentiality.
- Volunteers adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy and procedure concerning the reporting of neglect, suspected abuse or when physical harm could come to the person or to a third party.
- Volunteers support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of minors.
- Volunteers are aware they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, they will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power. Physical, sexual, or romantic relationships between an adult volunteer and a minor are unethical and are prohibited.
- Volunteers model healthy and positive behaviors with minors. Procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with minors is unethical and is prohibited.
- Volunteers are aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
- Volunteers are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- Volunteers are aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE CODE OF BEHAVIOR AND COMMIT TO UPHOLD THIS CODE IN MY MINISTRY. I AFFIRM THAT THE INFORMATION I HAVE PROVIDED IS COMPLETE AND TRUTHFUL

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

- Employees and volunteers work collaboratively with the pastor and/or other supervisors and associates in ministry.
- Employees and volunteers faithfully represent and practice the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
- Employees and volunteers are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities.
- Employees and volunteers respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their own personal form of spirituality normative.
- Employees and volunteers recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful of anyone or any group.
- Employees and volunteers serve all people without regard to gender, creed, national origin, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political beliefs.
- Employees and volunteers act to ensure all persons have access to the resources, services and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.
- Employees and volunteers are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative.
- Employees and volunteers are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministry conscientiously, zealously, and diligently.
- Employees and volunteers exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- Employees and volunteers respect confidentiality.
- Employees and volunteers adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy and procedure concerning the reporting of neglect, suspected abuse or when physical harm could come to the person or to a third party.
- Employees and volunteers support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of minors.
- Employees and volunteers are aware they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, they will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power. Physical, sexual, or romantic relationships between an adult volunteer and a minor are unethical and are prohibited.
- Employees and volunteers' model healthy and positive behaviors with minors. Procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with minors is unethical and is prohibited.
- Employees and volunteers are aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
- Employees and volunteers are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- Employees and volunteers are aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

HARASSMENT POLICY VERIFICATION FORM

I, _____ ,
(please print your name)

(check one)

☐ An employee of _____

☐ An adult volunteer at _____

☐ A parent/guardian of a youth participant

have received copies of the diocesan policy on harassment. I understand that it is necessary that any complaint of harassment must be filed in writing with the **(a)** program administrator, **(b)** pastor or **(c)** Diocesan Safe Environment Office. I have had an opportunity to read the policy and am confident I understand the content and purpose.

Name of parish and program

Your signature

Date: _____

**HARASSMENT POLICY FOR
MINOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS VERIFICATION FORM**

I, _____ an employee, participant, or volunteer with
Print Name

Print Name of Location

have received and read the diocesan Harassment Policy for Minor Employees and Volunteers. I understand that:

- Harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, cuts down, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability.
- Sexual harassment is unwelcome attention of a sexual nature.
- Gender harassment is based on a person's gender. An example would be referring to a girl by a female body part.
- Hostile environment is when unwelcome sexual conduct is so severe and pervasive that it limits a person's ability to benefit from a parish activity
- Sexual harassment is against the law and against diocesan policy.
- Retaliation (getting even with) someone who reports harassment is against the law and against diocesan policy.

If I am a victim of harassment, I can tell a trusted adult without fear of retaliation or getting into trouble.

I agree to not participate in any form of harassment while I volunteer or participate in parish/school activities.

I agree to immediately report any harassment I may witness to a trusted adult leader in my parish program so that they may take the appropriate actions.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of parish activity: _____

RELEASE OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

FOR RELEASE OF PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND RECORDINGS

No photographs, digital images, or recordings of minors participating in youth events may be published or shared publicly without the written and signed consent of a parent or guardian. There is a release for this personal identifiable information within the parental permission and consent form (400.33), but if a form is not on file for the minor, then written consent must be obtained from the parents or guardians using the following form (also accessible for print in Section 6 of the Parish Resource Manual for Youth Ministry):

PARENT(S)/Guardian(s) CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND RECORDINGS

The undersigned hereby consents to the release of photographs, digital images or recordings, and name of the Participant to be used by the Diocese of Columbus and _____
(*Parish Name/ School Name*) for future promotional programs of the Diocese of Columbus and the Parish/ School. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact _____
(*Parish/ School point of contact*) at _____(*phone number*).

Parent/Guardian Name (*Printed*): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR ALL OTHER PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

No personally identifiable information of minors participating in youth events may be published or shared without written and signed consent of a parent or guardian. To obtain consent for any personally identifiable information beyond name, photograph, digital images, or recordings, the following form must be used:

PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

The undersigned parent(s)/guardian(s) of _____, a minor at
(Minor's Name)

hereby consent to the release of the

(Name of School)

following personally identifiable information:

Specific information to be released:

Reason for release:

Information to be released via:

The undersigned consent to the transfer of the above information to a third or subsequent party.

(Parent/Guardian Name)

(Date)

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

Diocese of Columbus
Catholic Youth Organization (CYO)
197 E. Gay Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Parent's Consent for Release of Personally Identifiable Information

The undersigned parents of _____, a member of

(Child's name)

_____ hereby consent to the release of the

(Parish name)

following personally identifiable information.

- **Photos without names of the athletes will be released.**
- **Photos will be used to help promote the activities and acknowledge the achievements of the participants in the CYO.**
- **Information will primarily be released through the Catholic Times and on the CYO website at www.cdeducation.org**

The undersigned consent to the transfer of the above information to a third or subsequent party.

(Parent's name)

(Date)

(Parent's name)

(Date)

A copy of the release is requested: *Please check one.*

_____ Yes _____ No

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
REGISTRATION/PERMISSION/RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT

PARISH NAME _____ PARISH CITY _____

Please print clearly; return with appropriate payment to your adult leader. All incomplete forms will be returned.

I. REGISTRATION

A. Name of Participant _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (_____) _____ Participant Cell (optional) (_____) _____

E-Mail _____

Parish _____ School _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____ Male ☐ Female ☐ Grade _____

Name of Adult Leader _____

B. Name of Activity _____

Location _____

Dates of Activity _____

Mode of transportation if not self-provided: _____

II. PERMISSION

The undersigned hereby state(s) that (he/she/they) (is/are) the (parent/parents/guardian) of the above-named Participant and have full legal responsibility for the Participant. The undersigned hereby grant(s) permission for the Participant to participate in the Activity named in Section I.B., above.

III. RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION

- A. **Release.** The undersigned on behalf of the undersigned, the Participant, and the heirs, successors and assigns of the undersigned and the Participant, hereby release, hold harmless from any liability, and discharge from all direct or derivative claims, actions, causes of actions, medical expenses, costs, legal expenses, other expenses and all other damages at law or in equity, known or unknown, direct or indirect, choate or inchoate against the Diocese of Columbus, the Parish and all current and former employees, agents, clergy, officers and volunteers of the Diocese of

the Parish, arising from the Participant's participation in the Activity named in Section I.B., above.

- B. Indemnification.** The undersigned shall indemnify and hold harmless the Diocese of Columbus, the Parish, and all current and former employees, agents, clergy, officers and volunteers of the Diocese of Columbus or the Parish from any claim, liability, suit, judgment, loss, damage, expense, fee or cost (including court costs and attorney fees) arising directly or indirectly from the Participant's participation in the Activity named in Section I.B., above, unless arising from the negligence of an indemnified party.

IV. SPECIFIC MEDICAL INFORMATION AND MEDICATION

- A. Specific Medical Information.** The Parish will take reasonable care to see that the following information will be held in confidence.

Chronic Conditions (e.g. Epilepsy; Diabetes)

Allergic Reactions (e.g. Food, medications, plants, etc.)

Dietary Restrictions

Immunizations: Date of last tetanus/diphtheria immunization:

Any physical limitations?

Has the Participant recently been exposed to contagious disease or conditions, such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, etc.? If so, list date and disease or condition:

You should be aware of these special medical conditions of the Participant:

- B. Current Medication:** The Participant is taking medication at present. The Participant will bring all such medications necessary, and such medications will be well-labeled. Names of medications and concise directions for taking such medications, including dosage and frequency of dosage, are as follows: _____

C. Non-Prescription Medication

Please check ONE of the following:

☐ No medication of any type, whether prescription or non-prescription, may be administered to the participant unless the situation is life-threatening and emergency treatment is required.

☐ Non-prescription medication may be given to the Participant, if deemed appropriate.

V. EMERGENCY MEDICAL CONTACT AND TREATMENT

A. Emergency Contact Information

Parent or Guardian _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____

Medical Insurance _____ Policy Number _____

Member's Name _____ Phone (_____) _____

Family Doctor _____ Phone (_____) _____

B. Emergency Medical Treatment

In the event of an emergency, the undersigned hereby give(s) permission to transport the Participant to a hospital for emergency medical or surgical treatment. The undersigned wish(es) to be advised prior to any further treatment by the hospital or doctor. In the event of an emergency, if the undersigned cannot be reached at the above numbers, contact:

Name & relationship: _____ Phone: (_____) _____

VI. CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

The undersigned hereby consent to the release of photographs and name of the Participant to be used by the Diocese of Columbus and _____ (PARISH NAME) for future promotional programs of the Diocese and Parish. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact _____ (PARISH POINT OF CONTACT) at _____ (PHONE NUMBER).

_____ Please initial here if you DO NOT consent to the release of personally identifiable information.

VII. CODE OF BEHAVIOR

The Participant shall comply with the following:

1. The Participant must stay and participate in the entire event. The Participant may not leave the premises unless accompanied by an adult leader, parent, or legal guardian.
2. The possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or weapons of any kind is not permitted.
3. Foul language is not tolerated.
4. The Participant must comply with any and all directions of activity staff.
5. The Participant must respect the rights and property of others. Damage to or defacing of property will be the financial responsibility of the Participant involved and the undersigned.
6. Failure to abide by this Code of Behavior may result in a request to the undersigned to transport the offending Participant from the premises, and the undersigned shall immediately comply with the request.

VIII. SIGNATURES

THE UNDERSIGNED HAS READ, UNDERSTANDS AND HEREBY AGREES TO AND ACCEPTS ALL PROVISIONS IN THIS AGREEMENT.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Legal Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

.

**DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS ADULT PARTICIPATION
REGISTRATION/PERMISSION/RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT**

NAME _____ PARISH _____

CITY _____

Please print clearly; return with appropriate payment to your adult leader. All incomplete forms will be returned.

I. REGISTRATION (Each Adult Participant Must Complete a Separate Form)

A. Name of Adult Participant: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

DOB: ____/____/____ Male: ☐ Female: ☐

Clergy/Religious: ☐ Group Leader/Youth Minister: ☐ HS Campus Minister: ☐ Medical

Personnel: ☐

Name _____ of _____ Group _____ Leader: _____

B. Name of Activity _____

Location _____

Dates of Activity _____

II. SPECIFIC MEDICAL INFORMATION AND MEDICATION

A. Specific Medical Information.

The Parish will take reasonable care to see that the following information will be held in confidence.

Chronic Conditions (e.g. Epilepsy; Diabetes) _____

Allergic Reactions (e.g. Food, medications, plants, etc.) _____

Dietary Restrictions _____

Immunizations: Date of last tetanus/diphtheria immunization: _____

Any physical limitations? _____

Has the Participant recently been exposed to contagious disease or conditions, such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, etc.? If so, list date and disease or condition: _____

Any special medical conditions of the Participant: _____

B. Medication: The Participant is responsible for providing and taking all medication, prescription or non-prescription, required by the Participant.

C. Emergency Contact and Information.

Emergency Contact _____ Phone Number (____) _____

Medical Insurance _____ Policy Number _____

Member's Name _____ Phone Number (____) _____

Family Doctor _____ Phone Number (____) _____

In the event of an emergency, the undersigned hereby give(s) permission to be transported to a hospital.

III. **RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION**

- A. **Release.** The undersigned on behalf of the undersigned and the heirs, successors and assigns of the undersigned hereby releases, holds harmless from any liability, and discharges from all direct or derivative claims, actions, causes of actions, medical expenses, costs, legal expenses, other expenses and all other damages at law or in equity, known or unknown, direct or indirect, choate or inchoate against the Diocese of Columbus, the Parish and all current and former employees, agents, clergy, officers and volunteers of the Diocese of Columbus or the Parish, arising from the Participant's participation in the Activity named in Section I.B., above.
- B. **Indemnification.** The undersigned shall indemnify and hold harmless the Diocese of Columbus, the Parish, and all current and former employees, agents, clergy, officers and volunteers of the Diocese of Columbus or the Parish from any claim, liability, suit, judgment, loss, damage, expense, fee or cost (including court costs and attorney fees) arising directly or indirectly from the participation of the undersigned in the Activity named in Section I.B., above, unless arising from the negligence of an indemnified party.

IV. **CODE OF BEHAVIOR**

- A. **Adults.** Adults shall at all times conduct themselves in a lawful manner appropriate to the Activity. Adults shall act with respect for all other participants in the Activity. Adults shall act in accordance with the principles of the Roman Catholic Church.
- B. **Student Activities.** Adult participants shall at all times be present and shall chaperone students assigned by group leader. Adult participants will supervise and monitor the movement of students throughout the activity. Adult participants will ensure that no students enter areas specifically prohibited. Adult participants will ensure that no students enter any rooms or areas that are not appropriately chaperoned by two adults. Adult participants will use safe environment practices such as not meeting with students in secluded areas; making sure enough adults are chaperoning all activities; observing other adults who are interacting with youth; and notifying OYYAM staff of any inappropriate activities throughout the duration of the activity. Adult participants will respect that the sessions are designed for the benefit of students and will refrain from excessive questions or participation in the sessions. The possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or weapons of any kind by students or adult participants is not permitted. Failure to abide by this Code of Behavior may result in a request for the adult to leave the premises.

V. **SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANCE**

Date of Criminal Background Investigation Report: ____/____/____

Protecting God's Children™ Date: ____/____/____

Location

I HAVE READ, AND UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO ALL CONTAINED IN THIS AGREEMENT.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE CODE OF BEHAVIOR AND COMMIT TO UPHOLD THIS CODE OF BEHAVIOR.

I AFFIRM THAT THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANCE INFORMATION I HAVE PROVIDED IS COMPLETE AND TRUTHFUL.

Signature

Date

**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
SELF-INSURANCE OFFICE CELL PHONE POLICY**

Accident statistics show that the use of cell phones while driving distracts a driver's attention from traffic conditions. To promote driver safety and to help reduce the possibility of vehicle accidents in connection with cell phone use, the Catholic Diocese of Columbus has adopted the following **CELL PHONE POLICY** applicable to all employees and volunteers:

- Cellular phone calls, both incoming and outgoing, are not permitted at any time while driving a vehicle for diocesan business.
- Diocesan business includes travel between the employee's work site and external meeting locations, and between external meeting locations and the employee's work site.
- Accidents occurring while a driver is using a cellular phone may be considered preventable, and subject to disciplinary action.
- A cellular phone's voicemail feature should be activated to store incoming calls while driving.
- This policy applies to both hand-held and hands-free cell phones.
- All non-emergency calls should be made once the vehicle is safely parked.

I have read and understand the **CELL PHONE POLICY** of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, as outlined above.

Employee/Volunteer Signature

Date

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
VOLUNTEER DRIVER FORM

Name of Driver: _____

Address: _____

Driver's License #: _____

State Issued: _____

Year, Make & Model of Vehicle: _____

Insurance Company's Name: _____

Date Insurance Coverage Expires: _____

Liability Limits: _____

(Minimum Limits of \$100,000/\$300,000 Required)

Please provide a copy of Proof of Insurance for our files.

In order to provide for the safety of those we serve, we must ask each volunteer to answer the following questions. Please initial beside of each item to verify that the statement is accurate.

☐

I have NOT had a conviction for an infraction involving drugs or alcohol (such as driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated) in the last three years.

☐

I have NOT had two or more convictions for an infraction involving drugs or alcohol (such as driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated) in the last seven years.

☐

I have had no more than three moving violations or accidents in the last three years.

☐

I am at least 21 years of age.

☐

I have an unexpired background check on file and completed *Protecting God's Children*TM with my volunteer location and the Diocese of Columbus.

☐

My vehicle is insured for minimum bodily injury liability coverage limits of at least \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per occurrence. I understand that I am required to have the above insurance coverage in effect on any vehicle used to transport students.

☐

My vehicle is insured for minimum property damage of at least \$100,000 or a combined single limit of \$300,000. I understand that I am required to have the above insurance coverage in effect on any vehicle used to transport students.

☐

My insurance policy includes coverage for uninsured and underinsured drivers. I understand the Diocese will NOT supplement the cost of any damage that my policy does not cover in the event of an uninsured/underinsured driver.

Please be aware that as a volunteer driver, your insurance is primary.

Certification

I certify that the information given on this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand driving for Church ministry is a profound responsibility, and I will exercise extreme care and due diligence while driving. I understand that I am a volunteer driver and am not an agent of the Diocese. I am 21 years of age or older, I possess a valid driver's license, I have the proper and current license and vehicle registration and have the required insurance coverage in effect on any vehicle. I have a current background check on file with my volunteer location and the Diocese of Columbus. I have completed *Protecting God's Children*™ training. I agree that I will refrain from using a cell phone or any other handheld electronic device while driving my vehicle.

Volunteer Driver Signature

Date

This form must be updated yearly from date of signature or when the signer's insurance coverage expires, whichever occurs first.

This form should be kept on file for 7 years from date of signature.

RESTRICTIVE ACCESS

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For Individuals with Sex Offense Convictions

_____ Parish (the “Parish”) is fully committed to the protection of youth and children from harm and abuse. Consequently, because of your prior criminal conviction for a sex offense against a minor and your actual or prospective registration as a sex offender in Ohio, please understand that your access to the Parish and your participation in the life of the parish will be limited. The limitations and terms that follow below are meant to reduce the risk, both to you and to the youth of our parish, of an incident or allegation of abuse.

It is my hope as pastor that through participation in the life of the Parish, as reflected in this memorandum of understanding, you will grow in your faith and love for Jesus Christ and that you will come to more fully recognize His presence within you and within in every other person.

RESTRICTIONS AND TERMS:

You are not permitted to come onto Parish property except as set forth in this Memorandum of Understanding. If you fail to abide by any of the restrictions, limitations, or conditions set forth in this Memorandum of Understanding, you may be precluded from entering onto parish property altogether.

School Related Restrictions

1. If you wish to communicate with your child’s teachers or administrators, you may only do so by telephone, regular mail, or e-mail, or by making an appointment to meet when school is not in session and school events are not taking place on-campus. You must receive written approval from the principal in advance for any such appointment, including parent-teacher conferences.
2. You are permitted to be on parish property to drop off and pick up your own child, with the following conditions:
 - a. You may not be present on campus for any period of time longer than that which is reasonably required to perform this task.
 - b. You must remain in your vehicle at all times. The school will make arrangements to bring your child to you.
 - c. You are not permitted to drop off or pick up any children other than your own child.
3. With the express prior written permission of the principal, you may be permitted to attend

specified school events that directly involve your own child, with the following conditions:

- a. Such permission may be granted by the principal only after having first obtained the approval of the pastor.
 - b. You must select an adult chaperone who is known to and approved by the pastor (the “approved chaperone”). The approved chaperone must accompany you at all times while present on school property.
 - c. You may only be present on parish property for the specific event for which you were granted permission.
 - d. If and when you are given permission to attend a specific school event accompanied by your approved chaperone, you may be asked by the principal to be in a specific location on parish property (or wherever the school event is taking place) for monitoring purposes. Moreover, you must avoid contact with unrelated minors insofar as is reasonably possible given the circumstances.
4. You are not permitted to volunteer or work at any school events.
 5. Except where prohibited by law or court order, you have the right to review your child’s educational records. You may do so by receiving the prior written approval from the principal to be on school grounds for that purpose, and making an appointment to review those records after normal school hours when school children are not present. Alternatively, you agree that the school may, in its discretion, send you electronic copies of such records.

Church / Parish Related Restrictions

1. You are not eligible to hold any volunteer or employee position at the Parish.
2. You must select an adult chaperone who is known to and approved by the pastor or administrator (the “approved chaperone”).
3. Except as stated above with regard to the Parish school, you are not permitted on parish property except for purposes of attending scheduled public liturgies, and then only with your approved chaperone. The approved chaperone must accompany you at all times while present on parish property.
4. At any Parish event, you may be asked by the pastor or administrator to sit in a specific location in the church for monitoring purposes, and you agree to comply with that request. Insofar as is reasonably possible, you must avoid sitting next to an unrelated minor.
5. You may be involved in parish groups only after having obtained the express permission of the pastor or administrator. If the pastor or administrator approves such a request, you must be accompanied by your approved chaperone, and the head of that ministry will be informed of your status and identity and the approved chaperone’s identity. You may not participate in any parish ministries or groups that involve or include minors.

General Conditions and Restrictions

1. The approved chaperone must:
 - a. be known to and approved by the pastor or administrator,
 - b. agree to submit to a criminal background check, and
 - c. sign a written document agreeing to follow the requirements of this Memorandum of Understanding.
2. If the approved chaperone is not available in a given situation, the pastor or administrator may identify and approve a temporary chaperone to accompany you for that single occasion.
3. Any time you are on Parish property you will limit your interaction to adults and you will refrain from all interaction or contact with unrelated minors, whether physical or verbal, insofar as reasonably possible under the circumstances.
4. You agree that the address, home phone number, and cell phone number listed below your signature are correct as of the date you signed this Memorandum of Understanding. Should any of that information change, you agree to promptly provide the pastor or administrator of the Parish with the updated information.
5. You shall notify the principal and pastor within twenty-four (24) hours of being contacted by any law enforcement officer concerning any new sexually-related charges or offenses.
6. Although it is not the pastor's intention to indiscriminately share this Memorandum of Understanding or information about your convictions and status as a registered sex offender, you understand and agree that this Memorandum of Understanding and any facts about your convictions and status as a registered sex offender can and will be shared by the pastor with individuals whom the pastor, in his sole and complete discretion, decides are appropriate or necessary to ensure the safety of children and others or to ensure that you are in compliance with the restrictions in this Memorandum of Understanding. For example, selected parish and school staff and volunteers may be informed, on a need-to-know basis, of your identity and the approved chaperone, in order to ensure compliance with this Memorandum of Understanding. The parish reserves the right to notify all parents of minors in the parish and/or school, with or without notice to you, to ensure that they are aware of your background.
7. You may request an exception to the above limitations. Exceptions will be granted only in the pastor or administrator's sole and absolute discretion and only for compelling reasons.
8. The pastor of the Parish may change or add to the restrictions contained in this Memorandum of Understanding in his sole and complete discretion at any time.
9. This Memorandum of Understanding is not a contract and does not in any way grant you any rights. It is simply meant to memorialize the limitations on your participation in the life of the Parish and to clarify the conditions under which you are allowed onto Parish property.

[Signatures on Following Page]

By signing below, you agree and acknowledge that you have read and understand everything in this Memorandum of Understanding and that failure to follow the restrictions contained in this Memorandum of Understanding in any way may result in you being prohibited from entering Parish property entirely and under any circumstances.

Signature:_____ Address:_____

Print Name:_____ Telephone #:_____

Date:_____ Cell phone #:_____

Approved Chaperone(s) Acknowledgment

I have received a copy of, read, and understand this Memorandum of Understanding, and I agree to abide by the terms and conditions set forth herein:

Signature:_____ Signature:_____

Print Name:_____ Print Name:_____

Date:_____ Date:_____

Telephone #:_____ Telephone #:_____

Parish

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Pastor: _____

Date: _____

Resource Directory

Organization	Phone	Services	Website
Adult Protective Services (Franklin County)	614-525-4348	Elder abuse prevention and intervention	jfs.franklincountyohio.gov
Africentric Personal Development Shop	614-253-4448	Batterer intervention, counseling, re-entry	apdsinc.org
ASHA-Ray of Hope	614-565-2918	South Asian community domestic violence resources	asha-rayofhope.org
Asian American Community Services	614-220-4023 x235	Multilingual domestic violence services	aacsohio.org
Beit Ohr (via Jewish Family Services)	614-449-4200	Culturally informed counseling & domestic abuse	jfscolumbus.org
BRAVO (via Equitas Health)	866-862-7286	Violence prevention	bravo.equitashealth.com
Buckeye Ranch	614-875-2371	Behavioral and mental health for youth and families	buckeyeranch.org
Capital Area Humane Society	614-777-7387	Animal support and abuse-linked reporting	columbushumane.org
Capital University Family Advocacy Clinic	614-236-6779	Legal advocacy for families and abuse cases	law.capital.edu
Catholic Social Services	614-221-5891	Family services, case management, food & shelter	colscss.org
CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence	614-224-4663 (24/7)	Shelter, crisis intervention, advocacy	lssnetworkofhope.org/choices
City of Columbus Prosecutor's Office	614-645-7483	Legal complaints and domestic violence charges	columbus.gov
Columbus Urban League – Victim Assistance	614-257-6300	Violence prevention and support services	cul.org
Community for New Direction	614-272-1464	Youth development, substance abuse prevention	cndcolumbus.org
Crossroads Recovery Services	614-445-0352	Batterer intervention, drug & alcohol programs	crossroadsrecoveryservices.com
Directions for Youth & Families	614-294-2661	Youth counseling, after-school programs	dfyf.org
Elizabeth Blackwell Center (OhioHealth)	614-566-5353	Women's health & OB/GYN services	ohiohealth.com
Franklin County Children Services	614-229-7000Alt: 614-275-2650855 W. Mound St	Child protection, foster care, support	childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov
Franklin County Prosecutor's Office	614-525-3555	Criminal cases, victim assistance	franklincountyohio.gov
Huckleberry House	614-294-5553	Crisis shelter, transitional living, youth housing	huckhouse.org
Human Trafficking Victim Services Directory/ Ohio Human Trafficking Hotline	844-END-OHHT (844-363-6448)	Resource designed to connect trafficking victims and survivors throughout the state with much-needed Ohio-specific resources, including emergency shelters, emergency services, psychological support, legal support and more.	https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Individuals-and-Families/Victims/Human-Trafficking/Victim-Services-Directory

Resource Directory

Jewish Family Services	614-231-1890	Counseling, senior services, workforce support	jfscolumbus.org
Legal Aid Society of Columbus	614-224-8374	Civil legal services for low-income individuals	columbuslegalaids.org
Long-Term Care Ombudsman (Ohio)	800-282-1206	Senior care advocacy	ombudsman.ohio.gov
Mount Carmel Crime & Trauma Assistance	614-234-5900	Trauma counseling for crime victims	mountcarmelhealth.com
National Domestic Violence Hotline	800-799-7233	24/7 confidential support for survivors	thehotline.org
National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline	866-331-9474	Teen dating violence support (24/7)	loveisrespect.org
National Youth Advocate Program (NYAP)	614-487-8758	Foster care, mental health, youth services	nyap.org
Nationwide Children's Behavioral Health	614-355-8080	Behavioral and mental health services	nationwidechildrens.org
New Directions Career Center	614-849-0028	Career counseling & workforce readiness	newdirectionscc.org
Ohio Attorney General Victim Services	800-582-2877	Statewide support for victims of crime	ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Victims
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services	855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453)	24/7 Toll-free child abuse report line	https://jfs.ohio.gov/child-and-adult-protection-foster-and-adoption/report-child-or-adult-abuse-neglect
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services	855-OHIO-APS (855-644-6277)	24/7 Toll-free adult abuse report line	https://jfs.ohio.gov/child-and-adult-protection-foster-and-adoption/report-child-or-adult-abuse-neglect/report-adult-abuse-neglect-and-exploitation
Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN)	800-934-9840	Shelter access, training, advocacy	odvn.org
Ohio Hispanic Coalition	614-840-9934	Bilingual domestic violence and legal advocacy	ohiohispaniccoalition.org
Our Lady of Guadalupe Center	614-340-7061	Hispanic outreach, food pantry, ESL, casework	colscss.org
Rape Helpline (24-Hour)	614-267-7020	Immediate rape crisis and support	https://rainn.org/
SARNCO (Sexual Assault Services)	614-566-4414	24/7 support, advocacy, education	ohiohealth.com/sarnco
Shalom Task Force	888-883-2323	Jewish community support & DV advocacy	shalomtaskforce.org
Southeast, Inc.	614-225-0990	Mental health, addiction, court services	southeasthc.org
St. Vincent Family Center	614-252-0731	Pediatric behavioral health, trauma-informed care	svfsohio.org
Suicide Prevention Hotline (Local)	614-221-5445	Mental health crisis & suicide prevention	mhafe.org

Reporting Abuse

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, please report it! It is not your job to investigate or have overwhelming proof before reporting. Leave the investigation up to the professionals. Please contact your county child protection agency and provide as much information as possible such as:

- The name and address of the child you suspect is being abused or neglected;
- The age of the child;
- The name and address of the parents or caretakers;
- The name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child and the address if available;
- The reason you suspect the child is being abuse and neglected;
- Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation; and
- You have the option of giving your name or reporting anonymously. Giving your name can help the investigator clarify information. The agency will not give your name to the person suspected of abusing the child.

Please Note: All of the above information is not needed to make a report. If you are not sure you have enough information to report, always err on the safety of the child. Children Services screens all reports to determine if there is enough information to investigate.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provides two dedicated reporting lines—one for reporting child abuse and another for reporting adult abuse. Each number connects callers directly to the appropriate child or adult protective services or local law enforcement office in their county.

Ohio's Centralized Reporting Numbers

- **For Children:**
 - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provides a single phone number to report suspected child abuse or neglect statewide: 855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453)
- **For Adults:**
 - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provides a single phone number to report suspected adult abuse or neglect statewide: 855-OHIO-APS (855-644-6277)

If you are aware of a youth being sexually exploited online, make a report to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children 24/7 CyberTipline at www.CyberTipline.org, and contact law enforcement.

If you suspect a child is in imminent danger from abuse, please call 911 immediately.

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected by a member of the clergy or any employee or volunteer at a Parish, Catholic School, or any Catholic organization or apostolate in the Diocese of Columbus, please report it immediately to your county child protection agency! After you have contacted the civil authorities, please contact the appropriate diocesan personnel so a safe environment can be maintained, and an investigation can be facilitated by an independent review

board.

Remember, protecting children means never minding your own business. No matter how uncomfortable it may feel, **you** could be the only voice that child has. Please speak up. For more information and resources, visit www.columbuscatholic.org/safe.

Safe Environment Contact Information:

Meredith Gaul, Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator

614-241-2568, Opt. 3

mgaul@columbuscatholic.org

Megan Matthews, Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator

614-241-2568, Opt. 1

mmatthews@columbuscatholic.org

Laura Lewis, Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator

866-448-0217

llewis@columbuscatholic.org

helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org

24/7 Safe Environment Emergency Report Line: 614-779-1966