



POLICY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS

I. POLICY MANDATE

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (“Charter”). Article 12 of the *Charter* provides as follows:

Diocese/eparchies will establish “safe environment” programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Diocese/eparchies will 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 sexual abuse.

This policy sets forth the procedures to be followed in the Diocese of Camden with regard to implementing safe environment programs for all individuals who have regular contact with children and/or young people.

II. APPLICABILITY OF THIS POLICY

1. All adult employees and volunteers (priests, deacons, religious and lay persons who are 18 years of age or older) who have regular contact with minors (under 18 years of age) will receive safe environment training within 60 days of commencing their employment or their volunteer service. All employees and volunteers shall be retrained every five years within 30 days of the fifth anniversary of their preceding training. Continued employment, or service as a volunteer, is contingent upon the completion of such initial and subsequent training. Any person as listed above, who requires recertification prior to September 30, 2024 will be grandfathered under the 120 days for recertification.
2. All priests and deacons (diocesan clergy, members of Institutes of Consecrated Life, and members of Societies of Apostolic Life) will comply with this policy.
3. Safe environment training will be included in the curriculum in Catholic schools, religious education programs and similar catechetical programs.
4. Parents of children who are enrolled in Catholic schools, religious education programs or other programs will have regular opportunities to attend safe environment training.

III. THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

1. In accord with Article 13 of the *Charter*, the Diocese will evaluate the background of all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. See “*Policy Regarding Criminal History Background Checks for Employees and Volunteers who have Contact with Children or Young People.*”
2. The Diocese’s *Standards for the Protection of Children and Young People* establishes acceptable behavior that is legal, professional and responsible. The *Standards* are available on the Diocesan website in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Creole and are provided to every parish and school. Copies of the documents are also available from the Office of Child and Youth Protection by calling (856) 583-6114.
3. The Diocese will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children.

IV. SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING: PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Training programs for adults will include the following:

1. What constitutes child abuse, including sexual abuse?
2. What actions, procedures and policies are used to prevent child abuse in any form?
3. How does an adult identify instances of abuse of a child, including sexual abuse?
 - What signs should an adult look for in a child who may be abused?
 - What signs should an adult look for in a person who may be abusing a child in any way?
4. What actions should an adult take when they believe that child abuse, to include sexual abuse, may be occurring?
5. What are the laws and policies regarding the reporting of abuse, to include sexual abuse, of children?

Training programs for children and young people will include age appropriate materials pertaining to personal safety. This includes information about improper touching and relationships. Children are not expected to be fully knowledgeable about child abuse or of the laws governing care of children but they need to know when they should seek assistance from a trusted adult.

V. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING

The Office of Child and Youth Protection will arrange and coordinate training programs for adults who have regular contact with minors. The Office will also arrange the educational programs for children in the

elementary and secondary schools as well as the religious education and other parish programs.