

Minute with the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth

July/August 2020

New Policies

The archdiocese has updated many policies related to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Those updates will be in effect July 1 and include:

The Code of Conduct –everyone will be required to review the code of conduct yearly. The Virtus system will prompt that at the same time the yearly sexual harassment prevention training is assigned to employees. Volunteers will be prompted to review the Code when they log into their Virtus accounts.

MRT – The State of IL requires all school employees and clergy to retake the [Mandated Reporter Training](#) every three years.

Virtus – During the Covid new reality, Protecting God's Children training will only be available online. New registrants are automatically assigned the online training. For those who have a Virtus account but have not previously taken the training, let us know and the online training can be assigned.

Virtus - Keeping the Promise Alive is a refresher course of the Protecting God's Children training. It will be assigned online, every 3 years beginning this fall. Notices will be sent through Virtus to users who took the original PGC training prior to January 2017.

References checks – will be required for all new volunteer through Virtus registration process. Pastors, D/CREs, principals will be required to indicate they have checked the references before the account is fully activated.

The Safe Environment Office will work with Pastors, principals and site administrators to help get everyone in compliance by June 30, 2021. Plan on watching upcoming webinars to get the help needed to meet these new requirements.

Child Protection in the New Reality



As schools and religious education programs open within the guidelines of the archdiocese, remember the safe environment guidelines have not changed. Moments of uncertainty and transitions can create gaps in our protection efforts. All employees and volunteers who work with children must be in complete compliance prior to working with children. All requirements, with the exception of fingerprinting, is now done online. There is no reason an employee or volunteer is out of compliance. Pastors and principals have the authority to suspend anyone refusing to comply.

OPCY Webinars

Mayra Flores and Amy Freshwater are having a webinar on August 7, 2020 1:30 pm. They will go over all areas of compliance. Use the Teams link below to join the webinar. All sites should have a trained site administrator.



[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

[Learn more about Teams](#) | [Meeting options](#)

All upcoming webinars will be through Teams. If you need help joining Teams Meetings, reach out to the Safe Environment Office or IT.

Coping with Covid-19

Covid -19 restrictions can cause anxiety in anyone. If the restrictions are beginning to take its toll on you or someone in your family, the information in this [Link](#) may be helpful.

The Five Steps to a Safe Environment



Regardless of the setting we find ourselves in, the principles of safe environment do not

change much. Whether we are meeting students in the classroom or virtually, remember the basics of creating a safe environment. The Five Steps presented in the Protecting God's Children training program are:

- **Know the Warning Signs:**
 - Goes overboard touching, frequently tickling or wrestling with children
 - Shows pornography or tells dirty jokes
 - Thinks the rules don't apply to them
 - Gives gifts or takes pictures without permission
 - More interested in being with children than adults
 - Always wants to be alone with children
 - Allows some children to break the rules, has favorites
- **Control Access**
 - Communicate the Archdiocese's commitment to keeping children safe
 - Use Standard Application process (now part of Virtus)
 - Obtain and Check References (now part of Virtus)
 - Ensure compliance with all rules
 - Require criminal background checks (part of Virtus)
 - Use appropriate email addresses
 - Use the Archdiocese's acceptable use of technology policy
- **Monitor Activity**
 - Identify secluded areas and make off limits.
 - Do not permit children to enter staff-only areas
 - Supervisors have open access to all areas and regularly are seen
 - Have enough trained adults in all programs
 - Encourage parental involvement
 - Install and use appropriate blocking software for all electronic devices
 - Encourage the monitoring of all youth internet activities

- **Be aware of children and youth behavior**
 - Know what is going on in their lives
 - Teach students how to protect themselves, what to do if someone makes them uncomfortable
- **Communicate Your Concerns**
 - If you see something say something
 - Call the child abuse hotline in you know or suspect a child has been abused
 - Report violations of the Code of Conduct to school or parish personnel
 - Report boundary violations to appropriate personnel



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We are in this together