

## **Part 1: PREVENTION**

The provisions of this section are intended to help ensure that no child or vulnerable adult is abused and that those entrusted to the care of the Church are kept safe. Everyone in the community has a part to play: parents, clergy, teachers, religious educators, lay ministers, and lay volunteers (including youth and adults who are not directly involved in work with children or vulnerable adults).

### **1.1 EDUCATION**

*“Diocese/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 organizers to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, employees, volunteers, and others about ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors.” (Charter, Article 12)*

- 1.1.1 All parishes, schools, and institutions in the Diocese of Youngstown shall provide their employees and volunteers with access to this policy in a paper or digital format.
- 1.1.2 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, and employees, and any volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, shall read this policy and complete and sign the Authorization and Verification and Acknowledgement forms (Appendix 9).
- 1.1.3 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, and employees, and any volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, shall learn about the causes, forms, and symptoms of sexual abuse by attending and participating in the “VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children” program.
- 1.1.4 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, and employees, and any volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, shall complete continuing education about the causes, forms, and symptoms of child/vulnerable adult abuse.
- 1.1.5 Volunteers who are not working with children or vulnerable adults are also encouraged to participate in the “VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children” program and opportunities for continuing education.
- 1.1.6 The Diocesan Office of Safe Environment shall provide resources for further education about child/vulnerable adult abuse that may be used by parishes, schools, and institutions in the Diocese of Youngstown. These resources should include texts, workshops, in-service programs, and recommendations for staff discussions.
- 1.1.7 Abuse prevention shall be addressed regularly in the usual in-service programs offered for employees and volunteers who work with children and/or vulnerable adults. Similar programs shall be offered by the Department of Clergy and Religious Services.
- 1.1.8 Parents/guardians of children or vulnerable adults are encouraged to learn about the causes, forms and symptoms of abuse. Parishes, schools, and institutions of the diocese are encouraged to assist with this recommendation by annually offering the “VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children” program for parents/guardians and members of the larger community at locations throughout the diocese.
- 1.1.9 Parents/guardians are encouraged to develop a good rapport with their children/wards and to alleviate any tensions which may interfere with good communication. Parents/guardians are also encouraged to avail themselves of “teachable moments” to discuss with their children/wards in a positive fashion the realities of child/vulnerable adult abuse.
- 1.1.10 Children shall be instructed to protect themselves by learning about potential risks and appropriate responses to abuse. Diocesan programs with respect to this instruction are intended to supplement the information that children receive in school in accord with the requirements of the State of Ohio.

- a) The Office of Catholic Schools and the Office of Religious Education, in collaboration with other offices and agencies of the diocese and the State of Ohio, shall develop or identify curricula, programs, and in-service opportunities which will be used for the training of children.
  - b) The curricula of Catholic schools and religious education programs shall contain age-appropriate learning objectives intended to protect children from abuse at each grade level from pre-K through 12. Other youth programs in Catholic parishes and institutions which teach about personal health and development or human sexuality are likewise to include learning objectives on the topic of child protection/safe environment.
- 1.1.11 The Diocese of Youngstown shall maintain and staff a Safe Environment Office, which will be tasked with ensuring compliance with the contents of this policy. This office shall also be responsible for providing all necessary policy booklets, forms, procedures and instructions for personnel as well as materials and opportunities for continuing education (cf. 1.1.6).
  - 1.1.12 The Safe Environment Office, with the assistance of the Review Board, shall assist parish, school and institution personnel with their responsibilities in the implementation of this policy.
  - 1.1.13 Parishes, schools, and institutions shall cooperate with the Safe Environment Office to ensure that they are creating and maintaining a safe environment.

## 1.2 SCREENING

*“Given the extent of the problem of 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.” (Charter, Article 16)*

Persons who serve children or vulnerable adults as employees or volunteers are among the faith community’s most valuable assets. They contribute so much to the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being of our community. Hiring agents must take precautions to ensure that only qualified persons are permitted to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.

*“The diocesan/eparchial bishop is to evaluate the background of all incardinated priests and deacons. When a priest or deacon, not incardinated in the diocese/eparchy, is to engage in ministry in the diocese/eparchy, regardless of the length of time, the evaluation of his background may be satisfied through a written attestation of suitability for ministry supplied by his proper ordinary/major superior to the diocese/eparchy. Diocese/eparchies are to evaluate the background of all their respective diocesan/eparchial and parish/school or other paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include contact with minors. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies. Each diocese/eparchy is to determine the application/renewal of background checks according to local practice. In addition, they are to employ adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination.” (Charter, Article 13)*

- 1.2.1 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, and employees, and any volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, shall submit to a background check.
- 1.2.2 No person with a criminal conviction for an offense listed in Appendix 3 shall be permitted to serve as an employee or volunteer in a position that involves regular contact with children or vulnerable adults, by any parish, school, or institution in the Diocese of Youngstown. A person convicted of an offense listed in Appendix 3 may request an exception to 1.2.2. This request for exception will be reviewed by the Chancellor, Safe Environment Coordinator, Victim Assistance Coordinator, Diocesan Investigator, and the person’s local supervisors.
- 1.2.3 Hiring agents shall screen all applicants for employment and any volunteers who will have contact with children or vulnerable adults (Appendix 5).

- 1.2.4 Hiring agents shall take due precautions in order to ensure that only those persons who are psychologically and temperamentally suited are chosen to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.
- 1.2.5 No one under the age of 21 shall work with children or vulnerable adults without an adult 21 years of age or older present who is fully compliant (cf. 1.2.15) with this policy.
- 1.2.6 Each applicant for employment and those volunteers seeking a position involving contact with children or vulnerable adults in the parishes, schools, and institutions of the diocese shall supply to their hiring agent personal information adequate to assess their suitability for contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- a) All applicants shall sign a release (Appendix 9) that authorizes their hiring agent to communicate any information discovered in the screening process to their supervisor and/or the Safe Environment Office of the Diocese of Youngstown.
- b) All applicants shall inform their hiring agent of crimes that will appear on their background check (Appendix 9).
- c) All clergy and/or religious who transfer from another diocese to a parish, school, or institution in the Diocese of Youngstown for the purpose of employment for ministry shall present to the Diocese of Youngstown a letter/statement certifying their suitability for service in the diocese (Appendix 4).
- 1.2.7 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, employees, and those volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults shall sign the Authorization and Verification and Acknowledgement forms (Appendix 9).
- 1.2.8 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, employees, and those volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults shall provide the required background check(s) to the Safe Environment Office of the Diocese of Youngstown.
- 1.2.9 All clergy, religious, seminarians, persons in formation, and employees, and any volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, shall agree that if they are arrested, charged, or convicted of any crime they will immediately report such information to their supervisor, who will then report this information to the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment (Appendix 9).
- 1.2.10 The Safe Environment Coordinator shall maintain a permanent register of all diocesan personnel (clergy or lay) who have abused children or vulnerable adults, or about whom questions have been raised, in conjunction with employment or volunteer involvement at parishes, schools, and institutions of the diocese.
- 1.2.11 A dossier shall be filed under the name of an accused person containing all pertinent information relating to the allegations, the status of the accused, and any other pertinent information. The diocesan attorney will approve the contents of the dossier before it is placed in the file.
- 1.2.12 All parishes, schools, and institutions in the Diocese of Youngstown shall appoint a Compliance Officer who is responsible for ensuring that his or her institution is compliant with this policy. Compliance Officers shall also assist with diocesan safe environment audits. This person may be an employee or volunteer, and this position may be added to an existing position.
- 1.2.13 The Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator shall conduct audits to ensure that parishes, schools, and institutions are compliant with this policy.
- 1.2.14 The Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator shall maintain a database of all active compliant persons who are working or volunteering in the parishes, schools, and institutions of the diocese.
- 1.2.15 Regarding clergy in particular:

*“No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor may be transferred for ministerial assignment to 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 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 or 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).” (Essential Norms, Norm 12)*

*“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 and diaconal formation and their ongoing formation. 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, no. 50, the Program of Priestly Formation, and the Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests, as well as similar, appropriate programs for deacons based upon the criteria found in the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. We will continue to assist priests, deacons, and seminarians in living out their vocation in faithful and integral ways.” (Charter, Article 17)*

- 1.2.16 In order for a cleric, religious, seminarian, person in formation, employee, or volunteer to be in compliance with this policy, and therefore cleared to work with children or vulnerable adults, the local compliance officer and the Safe Environment Coordinator must verify that the person has obtained and submitted the following requirements:
- a) necessary criminal records check(s) (cf. 1.2.6);
  - b) VIRTUS certificate of completion (cf. 1.1.3);
  - c) signed Authorization and Verification and Acknowledgement forms (Appendix 9) (cf. 1.1.2).
- 1.2.17 Parishes, schools, and institutions shall never permit persons who are not in compliance to work with children or vulnerable adults.

### **1.3 REPORTING SEXUAL OR NON-SEXUAL ABUSE OF A CHILD OR VULNERABLE ADULT**

Policies cannot in themselves restrain an adult from abusing a child or vulnerable adult. Thus, adults bear the responsibility to assist one another in preventing sexual abuse, and those at risk of sexually abusing children or vulnerable adults must seek assistance to avoid behavior which may place a minor or vulnerable adult at risk. Although this policy is primarily concerned with sexual abuse, all forms of abuse, such as physical, mental, verbal, and psychological abuse, must be reported.

*“Dioceses/eparchies are to report an allegation of sexual abuse of a person who is a minor to the public authorities with due regard for the seal of the Sacrament of Penance. Diocesan/eparchial personnel are to comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations*