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Training Requirements for Children

Children Attending Archdiocesan Catholic Schools

As outlined in the *Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People*, Safe Environment abuse prevention training will be provided to students attending Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

1. Kindergarten through 12th Grade will complete two "Teaching Safety Touching" lessons a year.
2. Per the instructions of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, the lessons should be taught once in the fall and once in the spring.
3. All training must be completed, verified, and received by the Safe Environment Office by May 31st of each year.

Training Program Descriptions for Children & Youth

The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training on the nature and scope of the problem. We must also give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm.

The "Teaching Touching Safety" program guide (*Teaching Touching Safety Guide*) is a tool designed to assist parents and teachers in this important task. The "Teaching Touching Safety" program is a vehicle through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might do them harm.

Created for Four Age Groups:

Grades K through 2

Grades 3 through 5

Grades 6 through 8

Grades 9 through 12

Each year, the program provides a theme that introduces and builds on the basic concepts of the *Teaching Touching Safety Guide*. The material is developmentally appropriate for each age group and includes content and activities that reinforce the message.

The materials for teachers include everything needed to prepare for and present each lesson and additional information to help better understand the context of the materials they are about to present. They will have access to a glossary, handouts, and other reference materials, including:

- Response to disclosures
- Instructions for reporting suspected abuse

The lessons are organized in a three-year cycle so each child experiences a different lesson plan each time the materials are presented and so each child receives the full range of information from the *Teaching Touching Safety Guide* in small, "digestible" bites. As a child advances to the next age group, there is a new set of age appropriate lessons that explore the major topics in increasingly greater detail.

Lessons

Year 1

Lesson 1: Touching Safety Rules—Students learn rules about what to do when someone's touch is confusing, scary, or causes discomfort. Students start to deal with the risks they face and begin to learn about making boundaries.

Lesson 2: Safe Friends, Safe Adults, and Safe Touches—Students and their parents establish guidelines for making certain which friends and adults can be trusted to act safely.

Year 2

Lesson 3: Boundaries—Students learn about personal boundaries and how identifying and honoring them can give them the self-assurance needed to speak up when someone tries to step over the line.

Lesson 4: Telling Someone You Trust—Students learn who to tell when something makes them feel uncomfortable or confused. Students explore the phenomenon and power of secrets in a child's life at various ages.

Year 3

Lesson 5: Grooming—Recognizing Risky Adult Behavior: Part I—Students learn about the types of behavior that may indicate that an adult is grooming the child or young person for something more than friendship. It also helps students learn to trust their own instincts about what is "okay" and what is "not okay."

Lesson 6: Grooming—Recognizing Risky Adult Behavior: Part II—Reinforcing the lessons from Year 2, this deals with peer groups and other influences (i.e. grooming by an abuser) that prevent children and young people from reporting inappropriate behavior. Children and young people learn to develop their own decision-making process in these situations.

Year 4

Lesson 7: Internet Safety—Assisting children and young people in recognizing the risks of providing personal information on the Internet and realizing how hard it is to know who someone really is on the Internet.

Lesson 8: Creating and Following Family Rules—Educating young people about Internet safety and teaching them the importance of creating and following family rules in the effort to keep everyone safe.

Structure of the Lesson Plans

This program and each included lesson are founded on the principles of appropriate relationship boundaries in the broader context of Christian values. All lessons are age-appropriate, and help children and young people develop the vocabulary and boundary distinctions necessary to empower them to begin to recognize inappropriate behavior by others, while practicing appropriate relationship boundaries in their own lives. Each lesson takes approximately 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

Each lesson for each age group includes:

- Instructions to help the teacher, catechist, or youth minister deliver the lesson
- Helpful teaching support from the Catechism to give the teacher or catechist a framework for how to keep the lesson within the context of Church tradition and theology
- A learning goal, including expected learning outcomes for students
- An overview for creating a successful learning experience for the specific age group
- Key vocabulary words and definitions that apply to the lesson
- Suggested activities, with instructions (and appropriate handouts for students as needed)
- A closing group prayer that reflects the key message of the lesson

Introductory Videos

Child sexual abuse is a sensitive topic. Although the "Teaching Safety Touching" program lessons include activities that are simple and fun, it is not easy for some adults to initiate a preliminary discussion about sexual abuse.

The new "Teaching Safety Touching" program video introductions are intended to relieve trainers of the responsibility for breaking the ice on this sensitive subject matter. The video opens the discussion, covers some basic issues, and allows the trainer to use the activities and supplemental materials in the lesson plans to engage children and young people in meaningful discussions about recognizing and avoiding unsafe behaviors. The video lays the groundwork and the trainer uses the activities to help students apply the message from the lessons to their daily lives.

Each video is approximately six to seven minutes long. In each age-appropriate video, a presenter will speak directly to children or young people about the purpose of the program and the goals for the lesson, as well as what the children can expect from the activities and discussion. The presenter will introduce the touching safety rules and the concepts of "safe" and "unsafe" friends and adults, and provide some basic facts, vocabulary words, definitions, and discussion points that will be further developed through the activities and supplemental materials provided in the training.

There will be one video for:

- Grades K through 5
- Grades 6 through 8
- Grades 9 through 12

The videos are also available in Spanish.

The individual videos for each lesson (English and Spanish) are available on a single DVD.

Scheduling "Teaching Safety Touching"

The "Teaching Safety Touching" courses will be scheduled once during fall and once again in spring per the direction of the Superintendent for Catholic Schools.

Review all materials you will need for the class beforehand to ensure all the materials and equipment you need are in place.

"Teaching Safety Touching" Teachers

Classroom teachers are the most effective presenters of the curriculum. However, if a classroom teacher is uncomfortable with the material, a school counselor, or principal can teach the curriculum.

"Teaching Safety Touching" Staff Training

Principals at each location will be providing all educators with onsite training. Each educator will have special access in Virtus and will be able to download materials that will instruct them on the implementation of each lesson for every grade. If for some reason an educator does not have access to these lessons, you may call the Safe Environment Office to set up access.

Parent Involvement

The abuse prevention programs are most effective when parents are involved in the education. The children and youth are more likely to remember the skills learned in school if they are reinforced at home.

Program Kick-off Ideas

- Curriculum Night/Open House- Many schools include the curriculum in the annual Curriculum Night/Open House giving parents a chance to look through the materials and ask questions.
- All teachers within the Archdiocese of Seattle will have access to Virtus. Under the "educator" tab there is a guide for parents, guardians, and other caring adults. There is also a booklet to help educate parents in what "Teaching Touching Safety" curriculum is about.
- Principals and or teachers may also use the booklet mentioned above to create take-home letters to inform parents about the particular lesson the child is learning, giving them time to discuss the material at home.
- If parents elect have their child NOT receive abuse prevention training, they must sign an Opt-Out form. This form can be downloaded from the Virtus database or you may print it from the Coordinator Toolkit located under the "forms" tab.

Talking to Parents

Some parents may feel apprehensive about their child receiving abuse prevention training in school. Below are examples of the concerns that may arise.

Sex Education Does Not Belong in a Catholic School:

Safe Environment is NOT sex education; it is personal safety and abuse prevention. Both programs are designed to give students the skills needed to keep themselves safe.

"Teaching Safety Touching" begins with a variety of safety issues, for example:

- The Touching Rule: A bigger person should not touch your private body parts except to keep you clean and healthy
- The Safety Steps: Say words that mean "No"; Get away and tell a grown-up
- It's never a child's fault if someone breaks the Touching Rule
- Never keep secrets about touching
- Recognizing personal boundaries
- Responding to those who try to violate boundaries
- What to do if someone is sexually abusing them or someone they know

Do these programs contain material that is potentially harmful to children? Doesn't this rob children of their innocence?

- Research shows that well-developed and theoretically sound personal safety programs do not cause psychological harm or raise undue fears in children
- Research shows that children feel more confident and empowered to keep themselves safe and are more likely to use the skills they are taught
- Both Safe Environment curriculums used in the Archdiocese of Seattle are research-based and age-appropriate programs
- They do not contain sexually graphic or explicit images of sexual activity or sexual assault that would cause harm to children
- Safe Environment programs effectively equip children with the knowledge and skills necessary to help protect themselves in a variety of dangerous situations including physical and sexual assault
- When approximately one in 4 children are sexually abused by the age of 18, the most painful loss of childhood innocence occurs in those victims

Opt-Out Options

If any parent would like to decline abuse prevention training for their child, he/she must sign an Opt-Out Form.

Opt-Out Forms are located in the Virtus "Educator" tab. They can also be downloaded from the "forms and articles" section of the coordinator toolkit page.

Signed Opt-Out Forms must be kept on-file at the school for five years. At the end of the Safe Environment compliance year, all schools must submit the Opt-Out Forms to the Safe Environment Office when the compliance forms are due.

Student Absences

Students who are absent for Safe Environment lessons do not need Opt-Outs. Their absences will be indicated when Attendance is recorded on the compliance forms. Students who miss one or more sessions of the training, but attend other sessions do not need a signed Opt-Out Form.

Verifying Attendance in the Schools

Compliance with the Safe Environment Requirements must be verified in two ways:

1. A written verification form, proving that all required training is completed, signed by the principal, submitted by May 31st.
 - The Training Verification Form will be mailed out and emailed to all Safe Environment Coordinators two months prior to the due date. You may also find a copy of the form under "forms and articles" on the coordinator toolkit webpage.
2. Student attendance numbers must be reported in the Virtus database.

Reporting Student Participation

Attendance for all children and youth must be recorded in the Virtus Database. Please enter the numbers for your school by May 31st at www.virtusonline.org.

Safe Environment Coordinators and educators may enter the following information:

- Login to Virtus using your username and password
- Click on the "educator" tab
- Click on "record training" and fill in all appropriate information

Independent Schools

Independent Schools (Level II Schools) operate within the Archdiocese of Seattle with the permission of the Archbishop but are not owned and operated by the Archdiocese of Seattle.

As legally separate entities, these Level II Schools do not adhere to the Safe Environment policies of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

However, since the Archbishop of Seattle is ultimately accountable for all schools operating in the archdiocese, Level II Schools must satisfy all Safe Environment requirements as outlined in the *Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People* (USCCB, 2003) which mandates that:

- All employees and any volunteers with ongoing unsupervised access to minors and vulnerable adults must: complete a criminal background check, sign-off on abuse prevention policies, and complete training about how to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people.
- Safe Environment training must also be provided to children, youth, and parents.
- Level II Schools must follow the abuse prevention policies of their own organization or governing body.
- All Level II Schools are responsible for logistics pertaining to meeting the Safe Environment requirements which includes:
 - Selecting and obtaining the curriculum to be used to provide training
 - They are responsible for all record keeping to verify compliance with all Safe Environment obligations
 - They are responsible for all costs related to the Safe Environment requirements
 - While each Level II School follows their own policies to accomplish these mandates, the principal must sign a Verification Form each spring which confirms that the school has fulfilled all Safe Environment requirements as defined in the *Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People* for that academic year