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Training Requirements

All Church Personnel[1] are required to complete Safe Environment training as outlined in the *Policy for the Prevention of & Response to Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct & Sexual Harassment.*

Initial Training

All new Church Personnel are required to complete the *Protecting God's Children for Adults* course within 30 days of beginning service if they have not completed initial training in the past.

Renewal Training

All Church Personnel who have completed the *Protecting God's Children for Adults (Virtus)* initial training, or the *Called to Protect for Ministries (old program from Praesidium)* initial training must complete an online refresher course every three years.

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[1] Church Personnel is defined as clergy, employees and volunteers who have contact with minors & vulnerable adults.

Training Program Descriptions

INITIAL TRAINING: *Protecting God's Children for Adults*

We have **two options** for initial training for *Protecting God's Children for Adults* sessions:

- **In-person group session** in a parish or school facility ~ 3 hour class led by a certified Facilitator of the Archdiocese of Seattle. Once training is complete the Facilitator sends the attendance roster the Safe Environment office for approval.

- **Internet-based at-home personal session** ~ *Protecting God's Children for Adults Online Awareness 4.0* for individuals who are unable to attend an in-person session due to scheduling or other conflicts. This format is accessed when the user logs into their newly-created profile. On the Home page they need to click on the link "you have 1 online module assigned" to begin the video. Once complete their profile is immediately approved.

Both options fulfill the requirement for initial training; a user need only **choose one or the other, not both**; a new user can register for either format when they create their Virtus profile.

These training sessions are designed to teach participants how to recognize the signs of abuse; how to respond to suspected abuse; and how to keep our ministries, programs, and schools safe. Required for clergy, employees, and volunteers with ongoing unsupervised contact with minors and vulnerable adults. Recommended for all volunteers.

Zoom classes are no longer permitted. In-person at a facility or the Online Awareness module viewed from home are the only two formats we now have available.

ONLINE REFRESHER COURSES

Abuse prevention refresher training is required of all active Church Personnel every three years as a follow-up to initial training. These modules are internet-based at-home personal sessions. Refresher modules are determined by Virtus and assigned automatically every three years. The user will receive a reminder email from Virtus a week prior to the due date as long as the user's email address is current in their profile.

Registering for Initial Training

New users have the option of registering for their initial training as they are creating their Virtus profile. This is the ideal way for people to register for either an available in-person session or the Online Awareness 4.0 personal session.

If a user doesn't register for training during the creation of their profile, they may do so at a later time by accessing their new profile and navigating to the Home page.

To register online:

1. On any computer with internet access, go to: https://www.virtusonline.org
2. Login as an existing user with USER ID and PASSWORD
3. On the Home tab, to the left find the Current Training box
4. Click "Register for an upcoming session"
5. A list of the in-person sessions around the Archdiocese will be chronologically listed
6. The internet-based training modules are listed at the very bottom
7. Click on "Update Pre-Registration"

Sometimes users register for an in-person session and do not attend. They may wish to re-schedule to either a different in-person session or perhaps the Online Awareness 4.0 personal session. Please see the instructions for how to re-register for initial training found in the Local Coordinator Toolkit on the SEP website: Safe Environment Coordinator's Toolkit. Feel free to email these instructions to users wishing to re-register their initial training option. Please reach out to the Safe Environment office if you need assistance with initial training that is awaiting approval in a user's Virtus profile.

***Protecting God's Children for Adults* Facilitators**

Each parish, school and agency of the Archdiocese of Seattle is encouraged to have at least one certified *Protecting God's Children for Adults* Facilitator available. The Facilitator will assist you in meeting the Safe Environment initial training requirements for your location by offering in-person sessions for those who prefer the group format for learning.

Anyone interested in becoming a Facilitator must complete an application which is signed as endorsement by their pastor, priest administrator, pastoral coordinator or principal. Clergy who wish to become Facilitators must obtain prior approval from the Archbishop.

Online webinar Facilitator training is offered through Virtus by a certified trainer. The webinars are offered periodically throughout the year, typically quarterly, and are conducted in English or Spanish and run for 5 days, 3-3 ½ hours per day. Applicants must attend the entire training session to be considered for the Facilitator role.

Anyone may apply. Qualities of a successful Safe Environment Facilitator include:

- o Comfortable speaking and presenting in public
- o Level-headed under stress
- o Emotionally and psychologically stable
- o Compassionate
- o Reasonably objective about sexual abuse
- o Comfortable discussing sexual issues
- o Able to maintain confidentiality
- o Motivated to participate in the program
- o Current with their own Safe Environment requirements

If your parish/school does NOT have a certified facilitator on-site:

Notify the SEP Office if you want to schedule a *Protecting God's Children* course but do not have a facilitator. The SEP Office will attempt to locate a facilitator available to facilitate a class at the date and time requested.

When a facilitator who is willing to host a class for your location is identified, you will communicate with the facilitator all of the logistics. You should speak with the facilitator at least one week in advance for final confirmation.

Scheduling an In-Person Group Session

The *Protecting God's Children for Adults* in-person group sessions can be scheduled by any Safe Environment Local Coordinator or certified Facilitator. There can be no closed or private classes unless cleared by the Safe Environment office.

Coordinate the logistics with the Facilitator to ensure calendaring, facility request and advertising in your parish bulletin, the school newsletter and on parish/school websites.

The *Protecting God's Children for Adults* session **must be registered into Virtus** to allow participants to register. **Unregistered sessions may not be conducted.**

Be sure to post your session well in advance to allow participants to calendar. To register a *Protecting God's Children for Adults* session in Virtus, you as Local Coordinator would use the following steps:

1. Sign into Virtus with your username and password
2. Click on the word ADMINISTRATION on the tab itself
3. There is a set of quick links: choose "Schedule a session"
4. Click button on top left "Add a new session"
5. Enter all required information, including:
   o Training Title (*Protecting God's Children for Adults* is the default)
   o Language
   o Location
   o Start date
   o Start Time
   o Number of days (always list one)
   o Maximum size of class – be sure you keep the number at a manageable level
   o Length (always list three hours)
   o Facilitator name – left click highlight the Facilitator then hit "Click to add" and it will move the name to the Selected Facilitator box
   o Contact Name
   o Contact Number
6. Notes: Use this space as a means to communicate important notes to participants such as the location address, or if the class will be in a certain part of the school building, no children permitted, etc.
7. Click "Add Session"

Hosting a *Protecting God's Children for Adults* Group Session

1. Schedule ahead and give sufficient notice.

   - A minimum of two weeks of advertisement is recommended
   - Advertise the course well and send out reminders
   - Make use of the weekly bulletin, parish or school newsletter, calendar of events on websites, etc.

2. Plan for Comfort.

   - Make sure that there are enough chairs at the course
   - Make sure that the temperature in the room is agreeable
   - Check to ensure that all attendees can see and hear the videos

3. Ensure all class logistics are addressed.

   - Have Sign-in sheets printed prior to facilitating the class
   - Have extra Registration Forms printed
   - Have Post-registration instructions available
   - Have handouts printed
   - Have pens available for participants
   - Make sure the video equipment is working. The course requires a DVD player or a projector with a laptop for USB. Equipment must also have sufficient audio so participants can clearly hear video.
   - **Remind everyone to sign-in! Only registrants with signatures will be approved for attendance**
   - Snacks and beverages are recommended

After the In-Person Group Session

Confirming Attendance

Be sure the roster for the session clearly indicates those registrants who actually attended the in-person session.

As promptly as possible after the session (within a day or two at most please) **email** the roster to the Safe Environment office at [sep@seattlearch.org.](mailto:sep@seattlearch.org) The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator is responsible for approving all attendance at in-person sessions. If attendance is not verified on the roster credit for the training cannot be approved. ***Please DO NOT mail any rosters or evaluations to the chancery. Email is preferred. Original paperwork must be kept on file at the parish/school office and kept according to the records retention schedule.***

- Facilitators MUST enforce that all participants sign-in on the class roster. Failure to do so will result in the participant not receiving a certificate of attendance.
- Walk-ins are allowed, but any participants who did not register online must fill out the sign-in page and manually fill in any missing information.
- Only attendees who have a Virtus profile will be given credit for the session. Attendees may create their Virtus profile retroactively and contact the Safe Environment office for verification of their attendance which will then be added to their profile once created.

Please coordinate with the Facilitator to ensure that these measures are taken and that the roster is promptly emailed to the Safe Environment office.

Church Personnel with Developmental Disabilities

Many of our parishes provide employment opportunities to members of the community with developmental disabilities. As an employee of the Archdiocese of Seattle, they must complete the *Protecting God's Children for Adults* initial training and their online refresher training every three years. However, depending on their level of comprehension, the adult *Protecting God's Children* training may be overwhelming.

In cases where a developmentally disabled employee or volunteer is not capable of fully understanding the degree of responsibility with Safe Environment, they would be best served to not create a Virtus profile. Instead, treat them according to the procedure for Minors Working with Younger Children. In addition to running a manual background check, obtain the **Code of Professional Conduct Form**. A parent/guardian or other trusted adult who knows the individual well, must sit with the individual and discuss the Code of Conduct, ensuring that the individual has a good grasp of what the expectations are in regards to their work with minors or vulnerable adults. This Code of Conduct Form must be retained permanently.

Alternate Initial Training Options

There may be situations where an individual may have difficulty with material presented in the *Protecting God's Children for Adults* initial training session. They may have a history of sexual abuse and fear that the videos will trigger memories; or perhaps they attended an initial group session and had to leave abruptly because the videos triggered them.

Alternate options for training are available **but must be authorized by the Safe Environment office on a case-by-case basis**. The Safe Environment office will work with the individual, the Local Coordinator and/or the parish/school Facilitator to accommodate the individual's needs as best we can. If an alternate version of training is deemed appropriate, an Alternate PGC Class Verification Form must be completed and emailed to the Safe Environment office upon complete of the alternate version of training. This form will be provided to the individual and Facilitator/Local Coordinator if alternate training is being set up.

Please email sep@seattlearch.org if you need assistance with an individual who is in need of an alternate version for initial training.

Online Refresher Training

Online refresher training modules are required every three years for those Church Personnel who continue in active service.

Modules are determined by Virtus and are on a three-year cycle. Virtus sends an auto-reminder email about a week prior to when the refresher training is due. Users are encouraged to review their email address in their profile periodically and update as needed to ensure that they receive their reminders.

Church Personnel must complete the *Protecting God's Children for Adults* in-person session or internet-based personal session as foundation training prior to being assigned refresher training. Only authorized refresher modules count towards the requirement. If you have questions about assignments for refresher training please contact the Safe Environment office for assistance.

Safe Environment Training from Another Diocese

All dioceses across the United States are required by the USCCB to have a Safe Environment Program. Each diocese determines its own policy and requirements, parameters which may or may not coincide with the requirements of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

If an employee or volunteer has completed initial training through Virtus in another diocese we can explore whether or not that training can be transferred from their previous diocese to the Archdiocese of Seattle. Here are the steps:

1. Email the Safe Environment office with the user's full name, Virtus USER ID if known, date of birth, name of previous parish/school, name of previous diocese and current email address.
2. Safe Environment office will contact Virtus and inquire about the possibility of a transfer of profile.
3. If the transfer is possible – meaning that the initial training meets our requirement for the Archdiocese of Seattle – the profile will be transferred.
4. Once transfer is complete the Safe Environment office will review the profile and ensure role and location are accurate. SE office will email Local Coordinator and user of status and next steps.
5. The only requirement that potentially transfers is initial training. All individuals requesting profile transfers will still need to submit a background check and sign off on the policies for the Archdiocese of Seattle.
6. If a profile is not transferrable the Local Coordinator and user will be notified, and the user will be instructed to go ahead and create their Virtus profile for the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Safe Environment Training for Members of Independent Organizations

Independent Organizations are responsible for determining, implementing and managing their own safeguarding programs, policies and requirements. All costs associated with the safeguarding of their members must be covered by the Independent Organization and not the Archdiocese of Seattle. Please refer to the SEP website Coordinator's Toolkit for the Coordinator's Handbook Overview: [SEP-Coordinators-Handbook-Overview-2023](#). Pages 11-12 discuss the procedure for Independent Organizations.

If a member of an Independent Organization is also a Church Personnel working with children or vulnerable adults in a parish/school-based ministry, the individual would be required to fulfill the requirements for both the Archdiocese of Seattle and those of their Independent Organization.

Other Abuse Prevention Training

We are very fortunate in the Archdiocese of Seattle that we have many counselors, teachers, and nurses with prior abuse prevention training. However, unless they have completed *Protecting God's Children for Adults* (in-person session or internet-based personal session) here or in another diocese (and can provide verification), we cannot waive the requirement. This is for several reasons:

- Firstly, the training requirement is defined in the *Policy for the Prevention of & Response to Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct & Sexual Harassment,* which was promulgated by Archbishop Brunett in October 2007. We have a legal responsibility to follow this policy.

- Secondly, any training received outside of the Archdiocese of Seattle will not include policies and procedures implemented in the Archdiocese in terms of facility, programs, and reporting. We want all Church Personnel adhering to the same standards so that we can clearly identify when someone is behaving outside of those standards inappropriately.

- Thirdly, the overall philosophy of the Safe Environment Program is to unite all employees and applicable volunteers in order to work toward the prevention of abuse. It is important that all Church Personnel complete the same training and are familiar with the same language and training principles included the material.