

## ***Requirements of The Safe Environment Program***

A. All Employees and Volunteers who have contact with minors on a regular basis\* must:

1. Attend a Protecting God's Children Workshop
2. Complete a Criminal Records check from the Family Care Safety Registry or another entity.
3. Commit to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Volunteers working with Minors in the Archdiocese.
4. Employees or volunteers who have resided outside the state of Missouri any time over the last five years will have to undergo a one-time national background check. Illinois Residents will have Illinois and Missouri background checks conducted every even-numbered year.

[\* a person would be considered to have contact with minors on a regular basis if he/she would be in a position in which there would be a likelihood that he/she would be working with or near minors three or more times a year, would be participating in an overnight program with minors, or would be on a list of persons eligible to be working with minors.]

B. All children in archdiocesan educational programs are encouraged to participate in a "Safe Touch" program. Safe Touch programs are educational programs that teach children how to protect themselves from being sexually abused. Age appropriate programs are being implemented throughout the archdiocese.

**For compliance questions, call 314.792.7271**

## ***Reporting Suspected Abuse***

Certain persons are required to report to the Missouri Division of Family Services when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances, which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

Mandated reporters include:

- physicians
- nurses
- any other health practitioner
- psychologists
- mental health professionals
- social workers
- day care center workers
- teachers
- principals or other school officials
- clergymen or priests, except for information received in his professional capacity as a spiritual advisor, confessor, counselor or comforter
- peace officers or law enforcement officials
- persons with responsibility for the care of children
- any other person may report if such person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect

**Missouri Department of Social Services  
Children's Division Hotline Number:  
1.800.392.3738**

Victims of sexual abuse, in addition to contacting civil authorities, are asked to come forward in order to receive pastoral assistance. Reports of abuse may be made to any pastor or to **Deacon Phil Hengen**, the Director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the Archdiocese of St. Louis at **314 792-7704**

## **Archdiocese of St. Louis Safe Environment Program**



The purpose of the Safe Environment Program is to create a safe environment for our children.

### ***Archdiocesan Policy:***

The Archdiocese of St. Louis is committed to the prevention of child abuse and to assisting those who are affected by incidents of child abuse. For purposes of this policy, child abuse means physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child, other than by accidental means, by those responsible for the child's care, custody and control or from persons who are agents or employees of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. All employees, volunteers, religious, priests and deacons working in the schools, parishes and agencies of the Archdiocese of St. Louis are required to support this Policy and to comply with the Procedures developed to implement the Policy.

### **Step 1: Know the Warning Signs**

*Knowing the warning signs means that we can recognize the early signs of an inappropriate relationship with a child. If we know the warning signs, then we can identify potential abuse before it happens. If we know the warning signs, we do not have to rely on a child to report an incident.*

*An individual who:*

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring.
- Always wants to be alone with children.
- More excited to be with children than with adults.
- Gives gifts to kids, often without permission.
- Goes overboard touching.
- Always wants to wrestle or tickle.
- Thinks the rules do not apply to them.
- Allows children to engage in activities their parents would not allow.
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children.
- Shows children pornography.

### **Step 2: Control Access**

*Controlling access means that we are careful about whom we allow to work with our children. It also sends a message to potential child molesters that we are alert about child sexual abuse.*

- Communicate the Church's commitment to keeping children safe.
- Use written standard applications.
- Require criminal background checks.
- Complete face to face interviews.
- Check references.

### **Step 3: Monitor All Programs**

*Child molesters look for ways to spend time alone with children. If they know someone is watching, they have more trouble finding opportunities to abuse without getting caught.*

- Identify secluded areas, lock empty rooms.
- Develop policies regarding use of secluded areas. For example, staff should check bathrooms before sending children in alone.
- Do not permit children to enter staff-only areas.
- Only meet with children where other adults can pass by.
- Supervisors should look in on activities.
- Make sure enough adults are involved in programs.
- Allow parents to drop in on programs.
- Make sure that new programs are approved by the appropriate administration (school, religious education, and parish).

### **Step 4: Be Aware**

*Being aware means that parents should know what is going on in the lives of their own children and pay attention to subtle signs of a problem. Parents should talk to their children, listen to them, and observe them.*

*When we observe and communicate with our children, we are more likely to detect the signs if they are in danger. We can notice a sudden change in behavior, if they get moody or aggressive, lose interest in school, or stop taking care of their personal hygiene.*

- Talk to your children.
- Listen to your children.
- Observe your children.
- Let your children know they can tell you anything.
- Teach your children where their private parts are.
- Talk to your children often about protecting themselves.

### **Step 4, cont.**

- Teach your children often about protecting themselves.
- Teach your children what to do if someone tries to touch them.
- Teach your children what to do if someone makes them uncomfortable.

### **Step 5: Communicate Your Concerns**

*Communicating concerns means telling someone when you are uncomfortable with a situation or if you suspect abuse. It means paying attention to your own feelings and not waiting until it is too late. Only by communicating concerns can we use our knowledge to protect children. Even if abuse is not occurring, it is still important to let others know when you have concerns.*

- Talk to the person who concerns you.
- Speak to their supervisor.
- Notify a Church official.
- Call the child abuse hotline.
- Call the police.

**To report old or current allegations of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy or by lay employees or volunteers of the archdiocese, please call (314)792-7704.**